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Allegiances and Relations [one]

COLDCLAN

Leader - Mudstar; *male, 50 moons, mate is Mosspelt, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit, mentor to Mistpaw. (5 lives)*

Deputy - Cloudmask; *male, 44 moons, mate is Berrystep, daughters are Sunpaw and Skypaw.*

Medicine Cat - Larkwing; *female, 41 moons, sister of Mosspelt and Berrystep.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Sunpaw; *female, 10 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Skypaw.*

Warriors -

>> Berrystep; *female, 41 moons, mate is Cloudmask, daughters are Sunpaw and Skypaw, sisters are Mosspelt and Larkwing.*

>> Gorseface; *male, 30 moons, mate is Honeystrike, mentor to Tallpaw.*

>> Honeystrike; *female, 25 moons, mate is Gorseface.*

>> Redflight; *male, 51 moons, brother of Riverdew, mentor to Skypaw.*

>> Riverdew; *male, 51 moons, mate of Clearwhisker, daughter is Magpiepaw, brother of Redflight.*

>> Clearwhisker; *female, 48 moons, mate of Riverdew, daughter is Magpiepaw.*

>> Sandfall; *female, 24 moons, mate of Sootleg, sons are Rowanpaw, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Sootleg; *male, 30 moons, mate of Sandfall, sons are Rowanpaw, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Owlfoot; *male, 15 moons, brother of Mousecloud, mentor to Spiderpaw.*

>> Webfall; *male, 21 moons, mate of Mousecloud, adoptive father to Mistpaw, mentor to Magpiepaw.*

>> *Lakeheart; male, 40 moons, mate of Silvernose, brother of Creekwillow , daughters are Rosekit and Lilykit, son is Echokit.*

>> *Creekwillow; female, 40 moons, sister of Lakeheart, mentor to Rowanpaw.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mousecloud; *female, 15 moons, expecting two kits, mate of Webfall, sister of Owlfoot.*

>> Mosspelt; *female, 41 moons, mate is Mudstar, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit, sisters are Larkwing and Berrystep.*

>> Silvernose; *female, 30 moons, mate is Lakeheart, daughters are Rosekit and Lilykit, son is Echokit.*

Kits -

>> Fishkit; *female, 1 moon, brother is Stonekit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

>> Stonekit; *male, 1 moon, sister is Fishkit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

>> Rosekit; *female, 5 moons, sister is Lilykit, brother is Echokit, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart.*

>> Lilykit; *female, 5 moons, sister is Rosekit, brother is Echokit, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart.*

>> Echokit; *male, 5 moons, sisters are Rosekit and Lilykit, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart.*

Apprentices -

>> Skypaw; *female, 10 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Sunpaw, mentor is Redflight.*

>> Magpiepaw; *female, 11 moons, daughter of Riverdew and Clearwhisker, mentor is Webfall.*

>> Rowanpaw; *male, 8 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Tallpaw, mentor is Creekwillow.*

>> Spiderpaw; *male, 8 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Rowanpaw and Tallpaw, mentor is Owlfoot.*

>> Tallpaw; *male, 8 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Rowanpaw, mentor is Gorseface.*

>> Mistpaw; *female, 11 moons, unknown family, adoptive father is Webfall, mentor is Mudstar.*

Elders -

>> Shadeshell; *male, 80 moons, brother of Smokepelt.*

>> Smokepelt; *male, 80 moons, brother of Shadeshell.*

HEATCLAN

Leader - Foxstar; *male, 44 moons, mate is Jaypelt, mentor to Wolfpaw.*

Deputy - Dovefeather; *female, 37 moons, mate is Chillfrost, daughter is Beepaw, sister of Rabbitnose.*

Medicine Cat - Stonepool; *male, 52 moons.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice -Marshpaw; *male, 11 moons, brother is Sootpaw, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt.*

Warriors -

>> Goldheart; *male, 49 moons, mate of Beechpelt, sons are Marshpaw and Sootpaw.*

>> Beechpelt; *female, 38 moons, mate of Goldheart, sons are Marshpaw and Sootpaw.*

>> Rabbitnose; *female, 37 moons, mate of Mintstep, son is Applekit, daughter is Cherrykit.*

>> Mintstep; *male, 50 moons, mate of Rabbitnose, son is Applekit, daughter is Cherrykit.*

>> Chillfrost; *male, 40 moons, mate of Dovefeather, daughter is Beepaw. (was Coldfrost)*

>> Bearleap; *male, 50 moons, brother of Briartail.*

>> Briartail; *female, 50 moons, sister of Bearleap.*

>> Nettlepelt; *male, 26 moons, mate of Swallowfeather, daughters are Reedkit and Ivykit.*

>> Vinepuddle; *male, 42 moons.*

>> *Dustfire; male, 30 moons, mate of Mapleheart, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit.*

>> *Grassflower; female, 40 moons, daughter is Ashpaw, son is Wolfpaw.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mapleheart; *female, 24 moons, mate of Dustfire, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit.*

>> Jaypelt; *female, 36 moons, mate of Foxstar, son is Pinekit.*

>> Swallowfeather; *female, 23 moons, mate of Nettlepelt, daughters are Reedkit and Ivykit.*

Kits -

>> Breezekit; *female, 3 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, brother is Sagekit.*

>> Sagekit; *male, 3 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, sister is Breezekit.*

>> Pinekit; *male, 5 moons, parents are Foxstar and Jaypelt.*

>> Applekit*; male, 6 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose.*

>> Cherrykit; female, 6 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose.

>> Reedkit, female, 5 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Ivykit.

>> Ivykit, female, 5 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Reedkit.

Apprentices

>> Beepaw; *female, 10 moons, parents are Dovefeather and Chillfrost.*

> > Wolfpaw; *male, 9 moons, mother is Grassflower, sister is Ashpaw.*

> > Sootpaw; *male, 11 moons, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt.*

> > Ashpaw; *female, 9 moons, mother is Grassflower, brother is Wolfpaw.*

Elders -

> > Twigjaw; *female, 79 moons.*

(c) of the names to me, idea comes from Erin Hunter's work.

1. Sunpaw

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO NEW READERS:

Hello! Welcome to the world of ColdClan! I really hope you enjoy the book and love Sunpaw and Skypaw as much as I do. A couple of minor notes: firstly, I wrote this book way back in 2015. I've evolved as a writer since then! I know there are a few gaping plotholes that could do with changing but I don't have the time to rework the entire book to make stuff "fit". If you spot a plothole, chances are, someone else has too and has already let me know. I also know there are plenty of spelling mistakes and just dumb grammatical errors! Believe me, I reread chapters even to this day and think "how did I miss that?" You can comment on errors if you'd like, but if someone already has, please don't do this. I am still working on the ColdClan series, though I don't write as much as I'd like to. Please enjoy what's already here, and don't forget to like, comment and follow me for more works!

Thank you all!

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the high rock for a meeting!"

There was the call.

That was the signal Sunpaw had been waiting for. She hadn't been able to sleep the previous night. Her mind was clouded with anxiety for her clan. Impatiently, she had sat up most of the night in the entrance to the medicine cat den entrance watching the stars. Larkwing had encouraged her to sleep and offered her poppy seeds, but she just couldn't. Today, her leader made a very important decision; one that would affect the whole clan.

Her father, the deputy of ColdClan, had explained things to her and her sister. Cloudmask had said there was a sudden increase in mountain lions coming onto their territory, something ColdClan had never really had to deal with before. Their home lay in a forest on a great mountain, which levelled out creating a plain before continuing its incline towards the summit. A stream ran through the centre, providing them with fresh water, and the mountain had plentiful prey. At the base of the mountain was a barren, desert type area, which their rivals HeatClan resided in. HeatClan was different to ColdClan in many ways, yet they shared the same ancestors which brought them together once every moon.

Making her way to sit beneath the high rock, she spotted Skypaw only a fox-length away. She skipped over to her, planting herself between her sister and her mother. Berrystep licked her head affectionately, before turning back to watch Mudstar speak. Sunpaw perked her ears forward - this was the part she wanted to hear. Larkwing, the medicine cat, sat next to him showing no emotions. Sunpaw respected her mentor; she was always calm and prepared, and never lost her temper. She hoped one day she would be as good a medicine cat as Larkwing. Mudstar flicked his tail, asking for silence. With a sigh, he began to speak, yet there was a hint of joy in his voice... there was something else to this.

"Cats of ColdClan," he paused. "Four seasons ago, we lost contact with our ancestors, StarClan. As you mostly know, due to the recent circumstances with the mountain cats coming closer, this is very worrying. If StarClan aren't here to guide us, then how do we know where to go or what to do? Well, I tell you this now. Larkwing has finally received a message from StarClan!"

A sudden chorus of curiosity and happiness lit up the camp, like the Sun's rays in the shadows. Sunpaw looked wide-eyed at her mentor. How could the she-cat she loved and trusted not have told her about this? Why, this was big! Larkwing hadn't noticed her staring.

Skypaw turned to her and smiled. The two she-cats were more than just close. They were sisters, and shared an inseparable bond. Sunpaw decided this was not a moment to dwell on the fact that Larkwing hadn't told her. This was a happy moment! However, this raised the question she was positive all of the clan cats were

thinking. What was in the dream?

As the cats began to quieten down, Larkwing started to speak. "In my dream, I saw a stone and a fish next to each other. There were shadows, but the fish and the stone were glowing, and gradually pushing the darkness away." She dipped her head as an uproar began again.

Even Sunpaw was shocked. One moon ago, Mudstar's mate Mosspelt had given birth to two kits. They had been named Fishkit and Stonekit. Were these the kits that featured in Larkwing's dream? Sunpaw's mouth hung open like a trout! Skypaw gave her a funny look, and she snapped out of it. Perhaps... these kits would save them! Sunpaw was happy. She hoped that whoever was going to mentor them did it well. Her eyes fell on her own father sat below the high rock. He looked distracted, as if something was bothering him.

Cloudmask was one of Sunpaw's many idols. He was confident and witty, and had brought them up to follow the warrior code to their deaths. When Cloudmask was sad, Sunpaw was sad. Putting her love for her father into words was almost impossible.

When the meeting was over, Sunpaw headed over to Larkwing. They greeted each other by touching noses. "I hope you didn't mind me not telling you about the dream," The she-cat looked anxiously down at Sunpaw. "I told Mudstar straight after I had it, and he told me not to tell anyone. Plus, I knew you wouldn't mind."

Sunpaw shook her head, the anger ebbing away from her effotlessly. "Don't worry, it's okay. What's important is that we've finally had a message from them, Larkwing! This could be the clan's turning point." She turned her head, watching the other cats disperse.

Silently nodding, Larkwing followed Sunpaw's gaze and they both were lost in a trance, before Sunpaw spoke. "I bet Mudstar's pleased. His son and daughter, part of a prophecy!? That must be amazing!"

Larkwing smiled, her eyes lighting up. "I'm sure it is. Or even being part of a prophecy yourself, imagine that!?" Pausing to stretch,

Larkwing continued. "Well, we'd better get started on these chores. Would you possibly go find some yarrow for me? It grows a little further up the mountain. Go with the dawn patrol, if you'd like. I need to speak with Mudstar and Mosspelt, and also check on their kits. The future of our clan rests in their tiny paws!"

Sunpaw nodded quickly, before hurrying over to where a small group of warriors stood. Among them was Gorseface with his apprentice Tallpaw, Redflight, with his apprentice Skypaw, and Sandfall, the mother of Tallpaw, Rowanpaw and Spiderpaw. Gorseface greeted Sunpaw with a flick of his tail and a smile. Redflight and Sandfall both nodded to her before continuing their conversation.

Leaving his apprentice for a moment, Gorseface stepped towards her and smiled down with his big, welcoming eyes. It seemed as though he was leading this patrol. "What do you need and where do ya' get it, kid?"

Sunpaw always found it funny how he called her 'kid' like baby goats they sometimes saw on the mountains. Gorseface was one of her all time favourite warriors. He was so considerate and caring, and she enjoyed his company. "Up the mountain a bit, I need to get yarrow. Larkwing's supply is low."

Gorseface simply nodded, taking it in his stride. "Let's get going then, this is turning into less of a dawn patrol with every second wasted!"

Two apprentices appeared either side of her. "Morning, Sunpaw." Tallpaw, a kind tom cat, said to Sunpaw.

She smiled and replied with a simple 'morning'.

On her other flank, her sister nodded in acknowledgement.

Though not one to talk much, Sunpaw did enjoy the company of the other apprentices when she could get hold of it. Being the medicine cat apprentice kept her busy most of the time. Plus, every young she-cat had a crush on one of Sandfall and Sootleg's sons, Tallpaw, Rowanpaw and Spiderpaw; just Sunpaw had to be more careful

about who she told her crush! Most of her secrets she shared with her sister, and the grey cat could usually guess what she was thinking anyway. Those deep blue eyes got her every time! Sunpaw often became jealous of how pretty Skypaw was. When Sunpaw looked at her own reflection, she found herself bland and boring. She had brains, and Skypaw had looks. However Sunpaw knew together they were stronger than if they worked alone, and anyway, she adored her sister.

The patrol rounded a corner and stopped to place scent markers. Out of the corner of her eye, Sunpaw spotted some yarrow. However, they were covered by a bush of deathberries, probably the most poisonous herb to cats! She debated what to do. She could easily remove the bush, but she would get the deathberries on her paws and would have to wash it in the stream, which was ages away from here. Then, she had an idea. Grabbing a nearby fallen stick using all of her muscle strength she could summon, she pinned the bush back. A couple of deathberries fell to the floor, but she lifted her feet carefully around them and grabbed the yarrow. *There*, she thought to herself. *I may not be training to be a warrior, but I certainly still have brains!*

2. Skypaw

A little grey she-cat stood poised underneath a gorse bush, waiting for the perfect moment. Dead ahead of her was a fat, juicy vole, just perfect for an elder to enjoy. Her deep blue eyes were focused solely on the prey. As her belly rubbed gently against the soil, she prepared herself for the kill.

Skypaw tilted her head to one side, spotting something move the other side of the vole. With no time to react, she stumbled forwards and out of the bush heavily. In a flash, it was gone, and in the jaws of another cat.

"Tallpaw!" She mewed in annoyance. "That was my kill!"

The tom turned to her, actually looking like he hadn't seen her there. "Sorry, Skypaw, I didn't realise. Here," He pushed it over to her with his nose. "We'll pretend you caught it, yeah?"

The she-cat shook her head. "Oh, don't bother. Keep it... but thanks." She added, making sure she didn't hurt the tom's feelings. He was always kind to her, and there was no reason not to be back.. but Sunpaw often teased her about him having a crush on her. Skypaw was always honest with herself; he really wasn't her type. She liked mischievous rule breakers, much like Tallpaw's brother, Spiderpaw. Ah, now that was a cat she wouldn't mind as her mate. She drifted off into a little reverie, before being brought back to earth by her mentor calling her name. Redflight was a great mentor. He was fun, kind, and she had made a lot of progress with him. She trotted eagerly over to him.

"Skypaw, we're done here. Could you fetch your sister, she's over there getting some yarrow." He nodded in the direction of some thick bushes. Skypaw nodded and walked over to the bushes, looking for a way in. Sunpaw was smaller and more lithe than she was, with less muscle. Skypaw considered Sunpaw lucky, for she disliked her own pelt colour and bulkier size. It was just so annoying to be big all the time! This was proved at that very

moment, as she tried to crawl through a gap, but instead got scratched by the thorns.

"Ugh!" She said, looking down her flank at the little cuts, letting out a small mew of pain. Looking up for a way to get out, she realised that Sunpaw was stood directly in front of her, laughing slightly.

Angrily, she wriggled, trying to escape and take a swipe at her sister. "What, Sunpaw!? If you've got something to say, say it to my face!"

Sunpaw rolled her eyes, walking away. "Hey, if you're going to be rude, I won't help you out."

Skypaw sighed and looked at the ground sheepishly. "Help me, please?"

Smiling, the ginger she-cat glanced over her shoulder. Taking it as an act of submission, she crawled next to her sister, easing her out of the bush.

Taking a few steps backward, Skypaw shook herself free and gave a little leap of joy. "Thanks, Sunpaw. Ready to return to the clan?" She asked. "I'll race you!"

"You're on!" Sunpaw smiled, leaping into a run only a few mouse-lengths behind her sister.

When the patrol returned to the clan clearing, the day had turned glorious and the sun was shining bright. Most of the cats had seemed to have decided it was time for a nap, and laid curled up in the sun next to each other. This included Redflight, so Skypaw was left to find something to do for herself. Her bestfriends, Magpiepaw and Mistpaw appeared from behind a den. They had been training with their own mentors, Webfall and Mudstar, all morning. They looked tired out compared to Skypaw, who still contained a bountiful amount of energy. She was about to scamper over and pester Sunpaw when her father appeared behind her. He seemed nervous and upset, two emotions that she wasn't used to seeing on his face. Skypaw guessed he had been fighting with her mother again - they seemed to do that a lot recently. She bent her head

respectfully, before weaving herself in and out of his legs. "What's up, Cloudmask?" She frowned. The deputy turned away, looking into the distance.

"The sky, Skypaw?" He joked with a tiny laugh that came from the bottom of his throat. The smile soon passed, and he was back to his strange self again.

Skypaw nudged him affectionately. "It's okay, Cloudmask. We can just sit if you'd like?"

The older tom shook his head, before turning his back to her. "I've got things to do. But remember, it's almost time for the gathering. If you're well behaved, Mudstar may let you come." He finished on that note and wandered off up the cliff face, followed by his friend and confidant Riverdew. She had been told the two were inseparable as kits, and that hadn't changed now.

After taking a quick nap, Skypaw was awoken by the tiny paws of kits. She found a small face peering right into her eye as she began to open them, and realised it was the mischievous Echokit.

"Hey, Echokit." She grinned.

"Hey, hey, Skypaw!" The little kit tumbled back and forth over her paws. He was always getting into trouble somehow.

"Won't your mother be worried about you?" She asked the kit, half smirking and half pretending to frown.

Echokit cowered under her tail. "Mum's looking after Lilykit. She's sick, you know."

This was news to Skypaw, and she was quite stricken by it.

"Ill, Echokit? What's wrong with her?"

The little kit laid on his back and wriggled around slightly before answering her question. "She's coughing and it's all *ew*." He stuck his tongue out, obviously disgusted by what he'd seen.

"And Rosekit? Where's she right now?" Skypaw frowned. She

couldn't see the fluffy grey kit anywhere in the camp.

"Rosekit said she wanted a drink.. but that was ages ago." Echokit's emotion changed sudden and he looked at Skypaw with worried eyes. "Do you think she's okay?"

Skypaw shrugged, trying to act calm, but got up quickly and rushed towards the stream, taking the little silver tabby cat with her so he couldn't get into more trouble. When she reached the stream, she instantly heard distressed mews. Dropping Echokit and commanding him to stay put, she made her way to the waters edge. She glanced in the water - there was no sign of a cat struggling. However, on a rock that sat just above the water, sat a shaky kitten. Skypaw's eyes widened, but she did not panic.

"It's alright, Rosekit! I'm coming, just stay put!" The little kit saw Skypaw and became hopeful, only to lose her balance and a single paw plunged into the water. The current dragged at the kit, trying to pull her in. It made Rosekit more scared, and made Skypaw instantly pick up the pace.

She had to do something, and it had to be now.

Without another thought, she leapt into the stream, the icy waters shockingly greeting her like a lightning bolt. She swam with power, but the current had more of it. Rosekit's bottom half was now submerged, and she was clinging on for her little life. Skypaw tried to ignore the cold and paddled towards the kit. "Nearly... got.. you!" She called to the kit, but swallowed a mouthful of water of which she had to spit out before she choked. Reemerging from the chilly depths, Skypaw realised she was only a short distance from the kit.

"Rosekit!" She called. "Let.. go.. of the.. rock!"

The little kit looked at her as if she was crazy. "Let go!? I'll die!" She cried out, her tiny voice full of fear.

"No, you won't! I'll.. I'll catch you! Do it now!" Skypaw urged. The little she-cat put on a brave face and squealed as she let go. Skypaw lunged to grab the neck of the kit... had she got it? She just kept paddling. She didn't know what was happening. Suddenly, the

world went dark around her. All she heard was a single voice and a splash.. was that Rosekit? Was she okay!?

3. Sunpaw

From her seat in the medicine cat den, Sunpaw was watching the two kits that were supposedly part of the prophecy playing. They were so normal, Sunpaw wondered how on earth they would ever save the clan. But she knew she could not doubt them, for one day, she could owe them her life.

The warmth of the midday sun raised her spirits, and she rolled onto her back, gazing up at the sky. Listening closely, Sunpaw heard birds twittering above her head and in the distance, a mountain goat bleating to its child.

The chorus was broken by a kit's squeal. Sunpaw instantly jumped to her feet in surprise.

That was the sound of a kit in trouble, a cry she had only heard a few times in the past. It chilled her to the bones.

Rowanpaw sat only a fox-length away from her, and his eyes flickered up too. "Did you hear that?" He asked Sunpaw, trotting over to her hurriedly. He looked around, half expecting to see the kit come running into the camp crying.

"There it is again!" Sunpaw said quickly, getting to her feet. "It's coming from the stream!" The two young cats instantly set off at a full blown run. They skidded to a halt at the waters edge, glanced nervously at each other, before beginning to scan the waters.

"There!" Sunpaw piped up, as she spotted something struggling upstream. There was no time to get an older cat, as Rowanpaw seemed to have guessed. The fluffy light brown cat pushed off with his hind legs and plunged deep into the water. Sunpaw was shocked, her own ginger fur dampened from the splash.

"Rowanpaw, be careful!" She ran next to him as he swam. He was incredibly powerful for a young tom. His brother Spiderpaw appeared out of nowhere, looking agitated.

"I saw Rowanpaw jump in! What's he doing, is he mouse-brained?" Spiderpaw frowned at Sunpaw.

"He's rescuing a kit.." She broke off when she saw what Rowanpaw had between his jaws - it was her sister! "Oh, StarClan, Spiderpaw, look! He's got Skypaw!" She clawed at the river bank unhappily. She had never been a strong swimmer, and knew she'd probably drown if she attempted to help. Spiderpaw sensed her worry, and lay a comforting tail over her shoulders, looking into her eyes.

"My brother's got her, Sunpaw. It's okay." The two cats held each others gaze for a second, before turning away to look back at the stream.

Rowanpaw didn't seem to be feeling the effects of the current. At that moment, Sunpaw noticed something fluffy hanging from Skypaw's jaws. Although her sister seemed to have been knocked out, she still had a hard grip on whatever she was carrying. The large apprentice reached the bank, and Spiderpaw and Sunpaw assisted him up. Sunpaw flickered into medicine cat mode, long enough for her to instruct Spiderpaw so he could help her.

"I need lavender, catmint and feverfew from Larkwing's den. Rowanpaw, lick your fur backwards, keep your blood moving!" She barked orders, before turning to her own sister. "Oh Skypaw, why do you always try and be the hero? StarClan knows what damage you'll do to yourself one day!"

Spiderpaw returned quickly, followed by Larkwing and Rosekit's father, Lakeheart. Lakeheart took over licking Rosekit, so that Sunpaw could focus on her sister. Larkwing hurriedly chewed the herbs into a poultice, and fed it to each of the cats. "Well done, Sunpaw. This should help stop any chill developing." The older she-cat smiled down at Sunpaw, who did not break away from sharing tongues with her sister. Spiderpaw assisted Rowanpaw, who had begun shivering.

"Lakeheart, Sunpaw, Spiderpaw, we need to get them back to my den." Larkwing ordered. Climbing to her feet, Sunpaw began dragging Skypaw back towards the camp. Her sister was heavy, and she barely got a fox-length before she felt tired. Spiderpaw left

Rowanpaw's side, as the tom cat seemed to be able to carry himself to the medicine cat den. Hooking his teeth into Skypaw's scruff next to Sunpaw, the two apprentices pulled the unconscious cat across the dusty floor. When they reached the den, Mudstar noticed them, and Spiderpaw left to explain what had happened to their leader. Sunpaw was grateful for his help, but she could thank him later. For now, she needed to wake her sister up.

«»«»«»«»«»«»«»«»«»«»«»«»

A short while later, Sunpaw awoke to find darkness had fallen and the medicine cat den was cold. Neither her sister or any other cat involved in the previous events were in the den with her. Surprised, she stretched her body and with a flick of her tail headed out. Noticing Mudstar speaking with Larkwing, she trotted over to join them and hopefully get some answers.

"Ah, Sunpaw, you're awake!" Larkwing smiled at her apprentice affectionately.

Sunpaw managed a half smile. "Yeah, I'm fine." Her eyes flickered around camp, noticing only a few warriors. "Was everyone else okay? Rowanpaw? Rosekit? My sister!?"

"Don't panic, little one." Mudstar grinned. "Your sister saved Rosekit's life! Skypaw's asleep in the apprentice den regaining her strength, along with Rowanpaw. Rosekit's back with her mother and siblings. They're all better."

"Without your quick thinking, Sunpaw, they may not have survived. Good job." Larkwing added.

"I just did what any other medicine cat apprentice would do." She blushed, looking at her feet. "May I go visit Skypaw now?"

The two older cats nodded, before turning back to each other and continuing their conversation. Sunpaw twisted on her heels, the moon bright in her face. *Not long till the gathering,* she thought to herself. *I wonder who'll be going? Or how HeatClan are doing? I know how often they can have a shortage of food...* Her glance flicked back to her own clan as she looked through the entrance to the

apprentice den. There was her sister, curled up in a tight ball against Rowanpaw. Smiling at the two lovebirds, something at the back of the den caught her olive shaded eyes. A grey and white tabby tom cat came forward, stepping lightly over the sleeping apprentices.

"Spiderpaw!" Sunpaw greeted him quietly but affectionately, for this was the cat that had looked after her earlier and kept her calm. He smiled back at her.

"Greetings, Sunpaw. I hope you slept well. I was wondering if you'd like to come out with me tonight, to the moon cave? There's only a quarter-moon left till it's full and as you may have noticed, it's always big and beautiful at this point of the season. The evening hunt will have to join us, though." His gaze met hers and gave her the feeling of a lightning bolt. The power was shockingly comforting. She had always thought Spiderpaw to be the rough, brash one, but it appeared she had found his soft side.

"Of course I'll go." She whispered quietly. "Lets go see who's on the hunt?"

The two cat's pelts rubbed gently as they walked side by side, the ginger meeting the white like a river estuary joining the sea. Sunpaw was content. She may never be able to be mates with Spiderpaw, but she could enjoy his company.

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"So the sundown hunt consists of me, Mistpaw, Honeystrike, Owlfoot and Spiderpaw... and then Sunpaw's coming along to collect herbs. Right. We'll just let Owlfoot catch up and then we'll be off." Mudstar commented. The majority of warriors had gone to sleep as the moon was high and the night was well underway. Sunpaw and Spiderpaw stood next to each other sharing what little body heat each cat had. The little she-cat felt bad about lying to her leader, but there was no way he'd let her go just so she could talk to Spiderpaw.

Only a moment later did Owlfoot appear, as he had been checking on his sister Mousecloud who was pregnant. Although he wasn't

very old, Owlfoot was wise, and his mother had found an owl feather when he'd be born. He was also Spiderpaw's mentor. Sunpaw had respect for the warrior, and smiled at him in greeting.

The hunt entered the forest in silence, moonlight reflecting off their eyes. They made their way up the mountain, padding softly. When they reached their destination, the cats began to hunt. Mudstar took Mistpaw into a nearby tree to look for birds nesting. Honeystrike and Owlfoot went further up the mountain together to make the borders stronger and look for mice living in the moon caves. Flicking his tail showing that he wanted to follow her, Spiderpaw rounded a corner. Elsewhere, crickets chipped and an owl hooted. The night was alive.

Spiderpaw sat at the edge of the mountain. The moon lit up the world below, including the vast barren, desert lands at the foot of the great hill, where their fellow clan lived.

"It's peaceful, but not lonely." Spiderpaw remarked as Sunpaw sat down next to him.

Sunpaw nodded. She understood what he meant; you were alone, but there was always the comforting noises of the nocturnal animals. Pushing her body closer to his, for a chill ran down her spine, Sunpaw closed her eyes for a few moments. "The prophesied kits..." She began, only pausing as her eyes adjusted again when they flickered open. "Will they really save us?"

Silence came from the tom. Sunpaw guessed he was thinking about the death of their previous leader, Dawnstar, who had been savagely killed by the mountain lion threat. She had originally been Spiderpaw's mentor, and the two had been close. "I'd like to think so, Sunpaw. I truly would."

She sighed. Yes, she'd like to think so too. Enough with the death, the sadness and the pain. She silently prayed to StarClan for the kits to bring the closure and the end to the madness that the clan needed.

4. StarClan's Intervention

[image]

Dawnstar looked through the moonpool at Sunpaw. With a sigh she turned to her mate, Runningpelt, and gazed into his gentle eyes. Both the cats, along with their three daughters, had been savagely killed by a mountain lion. The previous leader now hunted in StarClan, alongside her fellow clanmates that had also been killed by mountain lions: Greysplash, Ashstone and Aspenpaw. Ashstone had taken a particular liking to the ways of Skypaw, whereas Dawnstar preferred the more deep nature of Sunpaw. The two had been watching the apprentices for a whole moon, and we're beginning to grow very attached. However, today was a worrying day for Dawnstar as Sunpaw seemed to of neglected her medicine cat ties and was getting close (perhaps too close for comfort) with Spiderpaw.

Runningpelt flicked his tail at Dawnstar. The she-cat rubbed her flank against his affectionately. She knew what it was like to be in love, for she was deeply so with Runningpelt. To be in love against the will of StarClan? Dawnstar may never had experienced that, but knowing the strength of love, she guessed how young Sunpaw must have been feeling.

"Do we intervene?" She asked, turning to the small huddle of cats with sparkling, star-like eyes.

A short pause occurred, where she guessed the three warriors were thinking about their answers. After what seemed like an eternity, Ashstone spoke. "Sunpaw may not know that she is part of something bigger, but we do. Being distracted by Spiderpaw could prove fatal to her destiny. I vote we do something."

Greysplash shook his head disapprovingly. "Doing something to Spiderpaw could hurt Sunpaw, and distract her even more. I think we shouldn't do anything.The loss would be too great for Sunpaw; I know what it's like to love and lose." The old, dark grey tom looked away. Dawnstar knew he was referring to the HeatClan cat

Grassflower. She had once been in ColdClan, but when she fell pregnant with Greysplash's kits, she joined her mother Twigjaw in HeatClan, leaving Greysplash behind. Now the tom hunted with StarClan, Dawnstar wondered how Grassflower felt about it.

Her own mate Runningpelt seemed to have the final say in the matter, and Dawnstar wondered what he would choose. When Dawnstar had been a warrior named Dawnfoot, her and Runningpelt had been the best of friends. They told each other everything, and it had only been towards their death did they both realize they were in love. Her marbled brown tabby flank glittered in the starlight as she waited for her mate to speak. Finally, the cat said, "I think every cat is entitled to love." Leaving it at that, the tom turned on his tail and headed towards where their kits Fawnkit, Asterkit and Spotkit were playing.

Dawnstar smiled proudly. She loved her mate dearly and was glad that they could share their time in StarClan together. If Runningpelt believed that Sunpaw was capable enough to look after herself, then so be it.

She glanced once more down at Sunpaw caringly, promising the cat silently that she wouldn't leave her side.

5. Skypaw

Dawn rolled in like a storm to the clan cats. The sky was gloriously bright, but the cat's faces were not so. Fear had flooded the camp, and the sunrise's colours reminded many of the cats of blood colouring the usually perfect sky.

The dawn patrol had been hit like a wave crashing against rocks by the mountain lions.
The cats had been patrolling the border furthest up the mountain, and the mountain lions had taken them completely by surprise.

Thankfully, none of the cats had died, but all five had been injured badly. Larkwing had said they were all lucky to survive - the mountain lions loved to play with their prey before killing them completely. The siblings Lakeheart and Creekwillow had fought bravely back to back protecting each other. Gorseface's back legs had been mauled, resulting in his apprentice Tallpaw and mate Honeystrike having to drag him back to camp whilst suffering from their own injuries.

The camp was a flurry of cats rushing around; multi-coloured pelts lined the dusty floor. Uninjured cats crowded those less fortunate, trying to help in whatever way they could. Larkwing and Sunpaw were rushed off their feet, barking orders to those willing to help. It was a clan cat's worst nightmare.

Guiltily, Skypaw crept out of the apprentice den, closely followed by Rowanpaw. The two were together all night, as Skypaw was very impressed that he had jumped in after her.

Afraid of being told off due to the fact they hadn't woken up when everyone else had, the two parted ways and went to see where they could help. Skypaw sat at the foot of an ash tree, contemplating what to do. She decided to take in what was happening from a distant. Breathing in steadily, she looked to the left of the camp, where the queens' den was. Gratefully, she saw the three queens being fed by Magpiepaw and Mistpaw. That took one weight off her

shoulders, as that was usually her job. Silvernose, a gentle grey furred tabby queen, looked on edge because her mate Lakeheart had been involved in the most recent mountain lion fight. The two she-cat apprentices seemed to be reassuring her, however.

In the center of the camp, Mudstar was assisting Larkwing with applying more cobwebs to Tallpaw's wounds. The young tom stood boldly, trying not to show his pain. Feeling proud that their leader didn't just sit around telling people what to do, Skypaw met Mudstar's gaze. The tom flicked his tail at her in acknowledgment. Her mother was nearby, helping Sunpaw make poultices. Gorseface seemed to have suffered the worse injuries, and Honeystrike was worriedly licking his wounds. The other two apprentices, Rowanpaw and Spiderpaw were leaving camp with Sandfall to bring back fresh kill and replenish the pile. Skypaw felt quite isolated.

A sudden wave of realisation flooded over her when she noticed that Cloudmask was nowhere to be seen. Where was the tom in their hour of need? It wasn't like him to abandon them when they needed him most. She contemplated it for a moment. The cat could easily had left to fetch supplies, but Mudstar would prefer his right hand cat next to him in these harsh times.

Turning on her heels making sure nobody was watching, Skypaw slipped out of camp, her silver pelt slightly dirtied but still beautiful. Her nose soon found a slightly musky trail of her father, leading down the mountain. Surprised, Skypaw followed the winding route he had taken. The trees that were at an angle on the face of the mountain were beginning to flatten out, and she guessed she had reached the base of it. Surely enough, the trees became sparse until eventually she reached their border with HeatClan... and Cloudmask had crossed it!

Skypaw stopped on the edge of the border, not daring to take another step. Glancing behind her she saw the huge mountain looming towards her. It was a scary sight for a she-cat who had lived most of her life on the great hill itself! Questions burned in Skypaw's mind, the main being what was Cloudmask doing on HeatClan territory?

As if StarClan were answering her question, Cloudmask emerged from behind a sand dune. Instinct told Skypaw to not let her father know she was there, and she dived behind a nearby desert bush. Thankfully she was downwind, and so Cloudmask hadn't noticed her there. The black and white deputy made his way back into the mountain trees, and disappeared among them. Where were all the HeatClan cats anyway?

Skypaw was about to cross back over the border when she heard a noise behind her. It was a sound she had never heard before. Her ears perked left and then right, but her eyes were not cooperating with her ears and she couldn't see anything. The noise was almost a rattling. She took a step back, only to tread on something she thought was a stick. But sticks in a desert? Something wasn't right... As her foot met the ground, something leapt at her leg and bit down hard. Instantly Skypaw let out a yowl of pain and stumbled forwards on to her side.

Turning back at to the stick that was alive, she saw not a stick but a moving creature heading in the opposite direction, obviously satisfied that it had scared the predator away. It was a rattlesnake, a ghastly critter that she had only heard about from the older cats.

Pain seared up her leg and she fell to the ground once more. She tried to scramble back to her border, but to no avail. "Fox-dung!" She cursed, almost tearfully. "I'm going to die out here!"

6. Sunpaw

Late morning had arrived in a flash for ColdClan. The confusion had begun to die down and many of the cats were now basking in the sun in the center of camp. Sunpaw was assisting Larkwing in the medicine cat den, as the two she-cats had realised that Gorseface's injuries were worse than they first expected. Larkwing had guessed that the tom had broken his hind legs, and she'd been right. It was a

first time experience for Sunpaw, and she watched over her mentor's shoulder as the cat attempted to help Gorseface. Working quickly, Larkwing bound the legs with cobwebs.

"How are you feeling, Gorseface?" Sunpaw asked, knowing that the cats they treated always tried to act tough - nobody wanted to retire to the elder's den early.

Gorseface was half asleep due to the poppy seeds he had been given, but managed to mumble a sentence out. "It doesn't hurt as much as it did; I think the poppy seeds are helping."

As Larkwing tied the final bind, the injured cat let out a yelp, but relaxed soon after. "You'll have to stay in here until you feel up to moving, Gorseface. I've only ever seen a few cats recover from a broken leg, but you have two... We need to be serious - this could be the end of being a warrior for you."

Gorseface's body tensed as he was agitated by Larkwing's comments, but it obviously hurt him so he tried to relax again. "A-as long as there's a little hope for me..." The medicine cat nodded, and headed out of the den. Taking a moment to look at the yellow eyed cat, Sunpaw eventually followed in her brown mackerel mentor's footsteps.

The camp was almost silent. Sunpaw guessed they were all reflecting on the previous events. With a sigh, Sunpaw headed towards the fresh-kill pile. Her belly rumbled because she hadn't eaten all morning. As she began to eat a tiny shrew, Mudstar jumped up onto the highrock. "Let all ColdClan cats gather for a meeting!" Instantly, Sunpaw buried her food for later. She'd make time to eat when her clan didn't need her.

His gorgeous light brown coat shining in the sun showing his health, Mudstar began to speak. "There is much to discuss." The tom said as the cats gathered round. Sunpaw saw her father at the base of the rock and her mother next to Webfall, but her eyes did not fall upon the familiar sight of the silver pelted blue eyed she-cat that was her sister. However, there was no time to discuss such matters, for Mudstar had already began talking.

"ColdClan cats, my friends. You all know that the dawn patrol was attacked by the mountain lions. What you don't know is that the brave cats on that patrol did manage to successfully injure one of the biggest cats, perhaps so much that it could die from it's wounds. I hope everyone would join in celebrating. Us ColdClan cats know more than any other cats about teamwork. Here's to Gorseface, Honeystrike, Tallpaw, Creekwillow and Lakeheart!" The leader paused at the clan cats shouted the heroes names.

"Sadly, Larkwing tells me that Gorseface's legs are broken, and may never heal properly. We must help him in any way we can to get back on his paw, as he is so young and should have a long warrior life ahead of him. His bravery will not be forgotten." More cheers, but Honeystrike was looking at the ground dismally. The two cats were not only mates but the best of friends, and Sunpaw couldn't imagine what it'd be like to lose her best friend Skypaw. Gratefully, Webfall and Berrystep were comforting the sandy coloured she-cat.

"Onto some good news, for StarClan has not forgotten about us. I had the same vision as Larkwing, yet the fish and the stone were more powerful than ever. My kits grow stronger every day, and I know that they will be great when they are warriors." Mudstar looked lovingly at his mate who sat in the queen's den entrance, their kits buried in the sides of her fur.

"Finally, we have some apprentices becoming warriors and kits becoming apprentices. We'll start with the kits. Rosekit, Lilykit and Echokit, please come up." Sunpaw smiled at the gorgeous kits. The adventurous Rosekit who had nearly drowned, the kind Lilykit who had suffered from greencough and survived, and the brave Echokit who was always prepared for whatever was thrown his way.

"Rosekit, Lilykit and Echokit, you have all reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior names, you will be known as Rosepaw, Lilypaw and Echopaw. Rosepaw, your mentor will be Berrystep. Lilypaw, your mentor will be Clearwhisker. Echopaw, your mentor will be Cloudmask. I hope Berrystep, Clearwhisker and Cloudmask pass down all they know on to you." He stepped back, allowing the new mentors and apprentices to greet each other by touching noses.

Sunpaw joined the cats in shouting the new apprentices names, before settling back down to watch her friends become warriors. Mudstar beckoned to Magpiepaw and Mistpaw to come forward. The two had worked well together this morning and had their assessment the day before, and Sunpaw was proud.

"I, Mudstar, leader of ColdClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turns. Magpiepaw, Mistpaw; do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

With bright grins, the two she-cats nodded and both boldly said 'I do.'

Mudstar continued, warmly looking down at them with his crystal blue eyes. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you both your warrior names. Magpiepaw, from this moment you will be known as Magpiefur. Mistpaw, from this moment you will be known as Mistheart. StarClan honors your cleverness and determination, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ColdClan." Resting his muzzle on the apprentices heads in turn, the new warriors licked their leader's shoulders. The two new warriors would sit vigil for the night, but not before the cats had called their names to welcome them into the clan. Sunpaw shouted loud and clear. She couldn't wait till it was her sister standing up there!

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A short while later, Larkwing and Sunpaw were sharing tongues just outside the medicine cat den. The afternoon was cooler than the morning, and Sunpaw felt relaxed and comfortable. "Today was eventful!" She chuckled cheerily.

Larkwing nodded her head, her eyes lit up with happiness. "It had a rough start, but it's ended well. Gorseface may never be a warrior again, but at least he's alive. Oh, and it's great news that Honeystrike is pregnant. Gorseface can be with her all the time, so perhaps StarClan meant him to be injured." She paused, glancing around the camp. "I haven't seen Skypaw for a while. Do you know

where she is?"

Sunpaw shook her head, though she'd been wondering the same thing. She hadn't spoken to her sister one today, and had no clue where she could be. All of a sudden, there was a cry from the queen's den. A grey cat charged out, straight over to Larkwing, almost crashing into her.

"Larkwing, Larkwing, come quickly!" Bouncing around, the tom nipped at Larkwing trying to make her get up. It was Webfall. "Come on! It's Mousecloud! She's having her kits!"

Making her grin from ear to ear, Sunpaw leapt to her feet. More good things were happening to the clan; StarClan was truly blessing them!

Hurriedly explaining to Sunpaw what supplies she'd need, Larkwing rushed to the queen's den. Sunpaw made her way over to their den and selected the herbs. From what Webfall had explained to Larkwing, it sounded like Mousecloud had been in labour for some time. This was true, for when Sunpaw reached the queen's den, two beautiful kits laid snuggled into Mousecloud's warm brown fur. The queen said she ached, and so Larkwing gave her a few herbs, but the birth had apparently been easy and not too painful for the young Mousecloud, though Mousecloud had always been tough.

"They're gorgeous, Mousecloud. What are you going to call them?" Gently, Sunpaw licked Mousecloud's head caringly.

The queen turned to her mate Webfall, partly tired but mainly joyful of the fact the kits were healthy. "Webfall wanted to call one Robinkit, after his father." The she-cat rested her tail on the tortoiseshell kit. "This is Robinkit." She moved her tail over to the other one, a handsome grey kit. "This is Heronkit, named after my brother who died when he was a kit."

Nodding in agreement, Sunpaw and Larkwing turned away and let the proud parents have time to themselves.

"I should tell Mudstar, he'll want to know that there are two healthy strong kits in his clan. He mentioned to me that he wanted us

medicine cats to learn a few defensive moves in case the mountain lions attack. Your father said he'd take you and his new apprentice Echopaw to the training hollow when you're ready to go." Affectionately, the she-cat rested her muzzle on Sunpaw's head, before heading to Mudstar's den.

Only a few fox-lengths away stood her father, speaking with Echopaw. The apprentice looked bolder and much more confident already, and he'd only had his ceremony this morning! Sunpaw was proud. She greeted her father and her clanmate, and the three of them trotted towards the training hollow.

Annoyingly, the training did not put her sister out of her mind. Sometimes her parents had joked that her and her sister were 'connected'. Sunpaw hadn't really believed them until recently, where she'd started dreaming the exact same thing as her sister. Although the dreams had only been trivial things, like fishing, hunting or climbing, every detail had been the same.

As Cloudmask was showing both Echopaw and her a defensive position, her back leg began to ache. For a while she ignored it, but there was a constant gnawing in her mind that her sister may be in trouble.

Ooh, what's happening to Skypaw? Why hasn't anyone found her after she was bitten by that snake? She's missed so much in the camp!

I have had such fab responses to this book. I wish I could personally thank you all for your encouraging words, but as I can't, these words are for you: thank you so much, you've spurred me on even when I don't feel like writing.

One of the people who has been great is @LightningstrikeTC - their books are amazing and you should check them out.

Thank you all again.

Allegiances and Relations [two]

MAJOR EVENTS

Both Clans

>> It's been a moon in the book since the last 'Allegiances and Relations' chapter was posted.
>> The next gathering will be very soon.

ColdClan

>> New elders in ColdClan: Gorseface has retired early to the elder's den.
>> New warriors in ColdClan: Magpiefur and Mistheart.
>> New apprentices in ColdClan: Rosepaw, Lilypaw and Echopaw.
>> New kits in ColdClan: Robinkit and Heronkit.

HeatClan

>> News: Foxstar lost a life due to greencough and Stonepool died from it. Marshfoot is now the medicine cat, and his apprentice is Ivypaw.
>> New elders in HeatClan: none
>> New warriors in HeatClan: Sootsplash.
>> New apprentices in HeatClan: Reedpaw, Cherrypaw and

Applepaw.
>> New kits in HeatClan: none.

COLDCLAN

Leader - Mudstar; *male, 51 moons, mate is Mosspelt, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit. (5 lives)*

Deputy - Cloudmask; *male, 45 moons, mate is Berrystep, daughters are Sunpaw and Skypaw, mentor to Echopaw.*

Medicine Cat - Larkwing; *female, 42 moons, sister of Mosspelt and Berrystep.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Sunpaw; *female, 11 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Skypaw.*

Warriors -

>> Berrystep; *female, 42 moons, mate is Cloudmask, daughters are Sunpaw and Skypaw, sisters are Mosspelt and Larkwing, mentor to Rosepaw.*

>> Redflight; *male, 52 moons, brother of Riverdew, mentor to Skypaw.*

>> Riverdew; *male, 52 moons, mate of Clearwhisker, daughter is Magpiefur, brother of Redflight.*

>> Clearwhisker; *female, 49 moons, mate of Riverdew, daughter is Magpiefur, mentor to Lilypaw.*

>> Sandfall; *female, 25 moons, mate of Sootleg, sons are Rowanpaw, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Sootleg; *male, 31 moons, mate of Sandfall, sons are Rowanpaw, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Owlfoot; *male, 16 moons, brother of Mousecloud, mentor to*

Spiderpaw.

> > Webfall; *male, 22 moons, mate of Mousecloud, adoptive father to Mistheart, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit.*

> > Lakeheart*; male, 41 moons, mate of Silvernose, brother of Creekwillow, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

> > Creekwillow*; female, 41 moons, sister of Lakeheart, mentor to Rowanpaw.*

> > Silvernose; *female, 31 moons, mate is Lakeheart, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

> > Mistheart; *female, 12 moons, unknown family, adoptive father is Webfall.*

> > Magpiefur; *female, 12 moons, daughter of Riverdew and Clearwhisker.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

> > Mousecloud; *female, 16 moons, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit, mate of Webfall, sister of Owlfoot.*

> > Mosspelt; *female, 42 moons, mate is Mudstar, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit, sisters are Larkwing and Berrystep.*

> > Honeystrike; *female, 26 moons, mate is Gorseface, expecting three kits.*

Kits -

> > Fishkit; *female, 2 moons, brother is Stonekit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

> > Stonekit; *male, 2 moons, sister is Fishkit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

> > Robinkit; *male, less than 1 moon, brother is Heronkit, parents are*

Mousecloud and Webfall.

>> Heronkit; *male, less than 1 moon, brother is Heronkit, parents are Mousecloud and Webfall.*

Apprentices -

>> Skypaw; *female, 11 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Sunpaw, mentor is Redflight.*

>> Rowanpaw; *male, 9 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Tallpaw, mentor is Creekwillow.*

>> Spiderpaw; *male, 9 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Rowanpaw and Tallpaw, mentor is Owlfoot.*

>> Tallpaw; *male, 9 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Rowanpaw, mentor is Gorseface.*

>> Echopaw; *male, 6 moons, sisters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Cloudmask.*

>> Lilypaw; *female, 6 moons, sister is Rosepaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Clearwhisker.*

>> Rosepaw; *female, 6 moons, sister is Lilypaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Berrystep.*

Elders -

>> Shadeshell; *male, 81 moons, brother of Smokepelt.*

>> Smokepelt; *male, 81 moons, brother of Shadeshell.*

>> Gorseface; *male, 31 moons, mate is Honeystrike, ex-mentor to Tallpaw, early retirement because of damaged hind legs.*

HEATCLAN

Leader - Foxstar; *male, 45 moons, mate is Jaypelt, mentor to Wolfpaw. (7 lives.)*

Deputy - Dovefeather; *female, 38 moons, mate is Coldfrost, daughter is Beepaw, sister of Rabbitnose.*

Medicine Cat - Marshfoot; *male, 12 moons, brother is Sootsplash parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Ivypaw; *female, 6 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Reedpaw.*

Warriors -

>> Goldheart; *male, 50 moons, mate of Beechpelt, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash, mentor to Beepaw.*

>> Beechpelt; *female, 39 moons, mate of Goldheart, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash.*

>> Rabbitnose; *female, 38 moons, mate of Mintstep, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw.*

>> Mintstep; *male, 51 moons, mate of Rabbitnose, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw.*

>> Coldfrost; *male, 41 moons, mate of Dovefeather, daughter is Beepaw, mentor to Applepaw.*

>> Bearleap; *male, 51 moons, brother of Briartail.*

>> Briartail; *female, 51 moons, sister of Bearleap, mentor to Ashpaw.*

>> Nettlepelt; *male, 27 moons, mate of Swallowfeather, daughters are Reedkit and Ivykit.*

>> Vinepuddle; *male, 43 moons, mentor to Reedpaw.*

>> Dustfire; *male, 31 moons, mate of Mapleheart, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit, mentor to Cherrypaw.*

>> Grassflower*; female, 41 moons, daughter is Ashpaw, son is Wolfpaw.*

>> Sootspalsh; *male, 12 moons, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt, brother is Marshfoot.*

>> Swallowfeather; *female, 24 moons, mate of Nettlepelt, daughters are Reedpaw and Ivypaw.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mapleheart; *female, 25 moons, mate of Dustfire, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit.*

>> Jaypelt; *female, 37 moons, mate of Foxstar, son is Pinekit.*

Kits -

>> Breezekit; *female, 4 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, brother is Sagekit.*

>> Sagekit; *male, 4 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, sister is Breezekit.*

>> Pinekit; *male, 5 moons, parents are Foxstar and Jaypelt.*

Apprentices

>> Beepaw; *female, 11 moons, parents are Dovefeather and Coldfrost., mentor is Goldheart.*

>> Wolfpaw; *male, 10 moons, mother is Grassflower, sister is Ashpaw, mentor is Foxstar.*

>> Ashpaw; *female, 10 moons, mother is Grassflower, brother is Wolfpaw, mentor is Briarleap.*

>> Reedpaw; *female, 6 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Ivypaw, mentor is Vinepuddle.*

>> Cherrypaw; *female, 6 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, brother is Applepaw, mentor is Dustfire.*

>> Applepaw*; male, 6 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, sister is Cherrypaw, mentor is Coldfrost.*

Elders -

>> Twigjaw; *female, 80 moons, mother of Grassflower.*

ROGUES/LONERS/KITTYPETS

>> Buzz; *male, 43 moons, loner, mate is Fawn.*

>> Fawn; *female, 22 moons, loner, mate is Buzz.*

(c) of the names to me, idea comes from Erin Hunter's work.

7. Skypaw

Darkened skies and a cold breeze were two of the factors to wake Skypaw. Whilst her silver body lay motionlessly on the floor, her crystal blue eyes flickered alive and her gaze rested upon a brown cat. Shocked by this cat she had never seen before, Skypaw attempted to get up; instantly, her legs collapsed beneath her and she scrabbled at the sand trying to move away from the cat, who seemed to be amused by her attempts to move.

"You," the tom began, taking a step towards her. "Are trespassing on HeatClan territory." He said it in a matter of fact way, as if he didn't care too much and was just pointing out the obvious. The cat didn't seem that much older than her, but had the confidence of a leader.

"I-I didn't realize, honestly! I was bitten by a snake and..." She trailed off, realizing she had just given away all her weaknesses to this enemy cat.

"Oh, I noticed that." Carelessly, he nodded to her hind leg. "I put some poultice and cobwebs on it. It wasn't a bad bite, actually."

Frowning, Skypaw glanced down at her leg. The cat hadn't lied - her leg was expertly treated, perhaps even better than her own sister could do. "Are-are you a medicine cat?!" She asked, shocked. How could a cat with all the strength to be an amazing warrior have chosen the path of medicine and herbs? That was a life that Skypaw found extremely boring, and couldn't understand why her sister had chosen.

The cat turned to look into the distance, supposedly towards where his clan's camp was. He looked distant for a second, as if remembering something or someone. "Only recently have I been appointed as the medicine cat. My name is Marshpa- sorry, I mean Marshfoot." Embarrassed to have forgotten that he wasn't an apprentice now, the tom looked at the floor. Skypaw pitied him. It must be hard to lose your mentor, and thankfully she hadn't had to endure that yet.

"I'm Skypaw." She said gently, for this cat hadn't shown any signs of being hostile to her - in fact the complete opposite! "Uh, why did you help me? I'm on your territory, I would have thought you would be ripping my ears off or something."

Marshfoot looked back up at her, laughing heartily. "I'm a medicine cat, I couldn't just let you die. You're probably valuable to your clan, and although I may not like them, I respect them."

Skypaw nodded. It was true, all apprentices would be assets to the clan. From what Marshfoot had done to her back leg, she guessed that he was valuable to his own clan. Not only that, but he had powerful, muscular legs that would be great for fighting.

Suddenly remembering why she had come here in the first place, Skypaw wondered if she should mention it to Marshfoot. Could she trust the cat she'd only just met? Well, she guessed it was a risk she was going to have to take, for she had to know why her father was coming to HeatClan territory!

"Marshfoot, I need to know one thing. Why has my father been coming here?" She blurted out. There was no going back now.

With his brows furred, the brown cat tilted his head. "Your father? You mean Cloudmask? Foxstar told the clan that he was a rogue kicked out of your clan and considering joining ours... but it was weird. He only stays for a short period of time, and spends most of that with Foxstar's mate Jaypelt and her kit, Pinekit."

Questions exploded in Skypaw's brain. Her father was visiting HeatClan to see some mangy queen and her kit? Why, it made no sense! Especially as Foxstar himself seemed quite happy to let Cloudmask in and see his mate...

"I know we've only just met, Marshfoot, but it'd be so great if you could do me a huge favour." She pressed her head against his neck for a second, showing that she trusted him. Slightly astounded, the confident brown tom seemed lost for words. However after a few moments he nodded. "I need you to spy on Cloudmask. If you can, find out exactly why he's visiting your clan. If you find anything, we'll share it at the next gathering. It's close now, isn't it? I need to

know that I can rely on you, though."

"Oh, StarClan, I'm helping the enemy." The young medicine cat glanced at the sky. "Yes, of course I'll do it. I can't promise anything though."

Shrugging, Skypaw let out a sigh. "I can't believe he'd betray his own clan like this, let alone StarClan's warrior code!"

Marshfoot laid a comforting tail on her spine. "Everyone makes mistakes, Skypaw. He may have his reasons for doing this, and if he does, I will find them for you." The two cat's eyes met for a moment, and Skypaw felt a connection. However she was the first to break away and attempt to stand. Marshfoot assisted her, and soon she was back on four legs and feeling as strong as ever. It was almost moonhigh. If she didn't get back soon, cats would be missing her.

"Goodbye, Marshfoot. And thank you! I'll see you at the next gathering." The little grey she-cat trotted towards her own territory.

Marshfoot was content. The she-cat had certainly brightened his day. Stonepool's recent death had hung over him like a storm cloud, but now it felt slightly lifted. "Farewell, Skypaw. May StarClan light your path!"

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When Skypaw arrived back in camp, only four cats were awake. One was her sister, anxiously pacing the edge of the camp, obviously conflicted about what to do. The other three were the brothers and elders Shadeshell and Smokepelt, and Spiderpaw, surprisingly sat next to Sunpaw offering her some kind words. As they noticed Skypaw, Sunpaw ran straight over and bowled her onto the floor. She winced at her leg, but took the embrace anyway. Spiderpaw was less forward, pressing his nose against hers.

"Oh, Skypaw, we were so worried! Where have you been? You've missed so much!" Sunpaw bounced around Skypaw, making her dizzy. She stopped when she noticed her leg. "Oh my, how did you do that!? It's been treated so expertly... who did this?"

Spiderpaw was looking over Sunpaw's shoudlers, obviously also impressed. Was it really that obvious? "Look, you two. I need you to keep a secret." She glanced at the two elders sharing tongues. One of them was almost completely deaf anyway, so it didn't matter too much, but Skypaw wanted to be careful anyway. Gesturing to the furthest corner of the camp, the three apprentices trotted over and sat down together in a little huddle.

"Firstly, I want you to both swear to StarClan you won't tell what I'm about to tell you to anyone. I mean it. *Nobody* can know. Spiderpaw, I'm trusting you because Sunpaw does. Defy me and I will make your life a misery." The cat didn't look scared, but he didn't look comfortable either. Sunpaw was obviously embarrassed by the way Skypaw had interpreted their relationship and was looking at the floor. "I know where Cloudmask has been going and why he's been looking so edgy." Skypaw said blatantly.

Sunpaw's jaw dropped. "You followed him!?"

With a nod, Skypaw continued. "He's been going to HeatClan. All the cats there are under the influence that he is a rogue and that ColdClan kicked him out. However, Marshfoot told me that whenever he goes there, he only stays for an hour or so and only ever speaks to Jaypelt and Pinekit, who are Foxstar's mate and kit."

Both the apprentices eyes were wide, for neither of them expected that their own deputy could be capable of this. "Wait," Spiderpaw interrupted. "Marshfoot? Don't tell me you've been secretly meeting with a HeatClan cat too.."

"No, of course not!" Skypaw shook away the thought. "Sunpaw, HeatClan's medicine cat died. Marshfoot is the new one. You may have known him when he was Marshpaw?"

Sunpaw pondered for a moment, before nodding. "Yes, I do know him. He's bold and quite bulky for a HeatClan cat. Larkwing always said he'd have done well as an average warrior, but he took the path of a medicine cat instead - by the looks of this binding on this wound, he's a good one! This is a snake bite, am I right?"

"Yeah. I got bitten by one tracking our father." The silver she-cat

muttered. Her own stupidity had caused her that wound, and she didn't like to admit it.

All of a sudden, Skypaw was overtaken by tiredness. She let out a huge yawn, and clumsily took a step backwards, as if she was going to fall on the floor.

"You need to rest and get that leg healed. If anyone asks, I'll say you were bitten by an adder and I bound the wound - they're common on our territory, more so than any desert snake." Skypaw licked her sister's head affectionately, and she and Spiderpaw let Skypaw lean on their flanks as they helped her to the apprentice den. That night, she was comforted as her sister said she would sleep with her. The warmth of her pelt made her swiftly fall into a dream, of which she was chasing Marshfoot in the open desert. Although it was strange to dream of a cat she had only met today, she enjoyed it, and soon forgot about all the cares in the real world.

oooohh
who do you guys ship more?
Skypaw + Rowanpaw
or the cute forbidden romance
Skypaw + Marshfoot?

also, i'm updating this a lot more than I expected. which is great, I guess, but I want to keep you guys wanting more, so I don't even know. I may write another chapter now. I'm in the zone, lol.

8. Sunpaw

Rolling onto her back as the morning light dawned into the apprentice den, Sunpaw found herself squashed in the center of Spiderpaw and Skypaw. The previous night she had slept in the apprentice den instead of the medicine cat den to keep her sister company. After yesterday's events of almost losing her, Sunpaw wanted to be as close as possible to her sister. Turning once more, she pushed herself into Skypaw's silky fur and started to drift back into a sleepy state.

Suddenly, there was a voice from the den entrance. "Rise and shine, sleepyheads!"

Although the call wasn't meant for her, the warm bodies around her were stirring and she had lost the comfortable sleep she'd been in. With a sigh, she got up and stretched her elegant body out. It had

been the furry ginger cat Redflight, who was also Skypaw's mentor, who had woken them.

The tom saw that the cats were hesitant to completely raise from their death like sleep, so he rolled his eyes and added, "Mudstar announces who is going to the gathering today!" Instantly, there was a rush for the den entrance. Sunpaw was knocked to one side with a yelp. Crazy mousebrained fools!

The day was sharp and chillier than the previous ones, yet nonetheless bright as the sun was high in the sky. The crispness woke Sunpaw up fully, and she shivered slightly, before heading to where her mentor stood selecting some fresh-kill.

"Care to share?" Larkwing asked as she picked out a plump rabbit. Nodding, Sunpaw laid in front of her mentor and began to eat. The flesh filled and pleasured her mouth, as she hadn't eaten since the previous morning due to worrying for her sister.

As the clan filled with cats, Mudstar jumped onto the highrock and called a clan meeting. Sunpaw only moved a couple of fox-lengths so she could see the leader, and Spiderpaw appeared by her side. "Cats of ColdClan, I have gathered you beneath the highrock to tell you who will be going to the gathering."

Mumbles from the crowd filled the air, and Cloudmask shushed them from his place at the base of the rock. "I have chosen Riverdew, Owlfoot, Webfall, Silvernose, Mistheart, Magpiefur, Berrystep, Redflight, Larkwing, Skypaw, Sunpaw and Spiderpaw. Cloudmask wishes to remain here as he had bellyache earlier and doesn't want to give it to any other cat."

How coincidental is that? Thought Sunpaw, and when she glanced over to Skypaw, she saw that the she-cat was also frowning. It was good Skypaw was going to the gathering, as from what Sunpaw had heard, her sister had an inside source of information in HeatClan.

For the rest of the day, Sunpaw decided to go practice her defensive moves once more, in case the mountain lions attacked her. She had chosen the medicine cat life because she was pretty rubbish at the usual warrior stuff, but if she couldn't defend herself, any life would

be ending pretty quickly. Following Skypaw and Redflight to the training hollow, Sunpaw felt anixety bubble up inside of her.

"Alright, you two. Defensive moves today." Redflight began. "Skypaw, care to show Sunpaw what we learnt in our previous lesson? Sunpaw, this is called the belly-rake."

Skypaw was always up for this kind of thing. She loved learning to fight and hunt, for she was active and couldn't sit still for more than a heartbeat! Redflight nodded to the she-cat, asking if she was ready. Skypaw flicked her tail in response, and instantly Redflight bowled her sister over, sending her flying. The tom then proceeded to stand over the top of her, and pretended to batter her belly. Using her back and hind legs, Skypaw shuffled downwards, raking Redflight's belly as she went. Rolling out from beneath him, the she-cat stood and smirked, happy to have done the move so well. "Good job." Redflight praised. "It was almost flawless. Sunpaw, it's all in the wriggle. Use your tail as you work your way down."

"Almost!?" Skypaw squeaked in annoyance.

Laughing, Sunpaw realised it was her turn. Preparing herself to be knocked over, she partly closed her eyes, and heard Skypaw snigger. Determined now to prove to her sister that she could do it, she mentally pictured what Skypaw had done when she had shown her the move. *Wriggle and slide,* she thought to herself. *All about the wriggle.*

Flying onto her side as Redflight knocked her over, Sunpaw opened her eyes wide and instinct took over. Wriggling with all of her might, she moved swiftly down Redflight's back. When she reached the end, she nipped at his tail, just for good measure. She huffed and puffed a little as she got up, for she wasn't used to so much exercise!

Redflight smiled proudly. "That *was* flawless, Sunpaw. I loved the tail nip at the end! Great job, both of you. You sisters would be unstoppable out there on the battle field." The three cats chuckled to each other. "We'll go back to camp now, but Sunpaw, if you ever want to join us again, we'd love to have you, wouldn't we Skypaw?"

Skypaw rolled her eyes but nodded anyway. Someone was better at her doing the belly-rake? She'd have to work harder on it!

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sorry, this chapter is short, but I really want to write from Skypaw's POV at the gathering (which is next chapter, wahay)

9. Skypaw

A deep navy blanket had covered the blue skies, as night had finally fallen. White dots scattered the dark blue, their lights shining brightly into the night. There was a gentle breeze which made the trees sway. The shadows danced around the camp as the few clouds moved over the full moon, which sat high and expectant for the cats of the gathering.

Skypaw had been preparing for a while. She'd been to a gathering once before, and it'd been exhilarating; so many different coloured pelts, so many different personalities... Truly, she thought that the gathering was the best thing a clan cat could visit. Sitting up as Mudstar appeared from his den, she waited patiently as he spoke to Larkwing, though her soul was bursting to go. Sunpaw appeared by her side, her eyes alight like the stars, for she was excited too.

"It's time to go." Mudstar stated.

Skypaw and Sunpaw glanced at each other, before bouncing over to Mudstar. As they left the clearing, Skypaw looked back to see if her father was there. He was, and he was watching them leave from the entrance of the warrior den. Although calm, his eyes looked partly lost and partly guilty. Shaking it off, Skypaw fell into line behind her sister.

The group of cats moved quickly, quietly and efficiently. If you couldn't keep up, you were left behind; it was simple. Skypaw attempted to speak to Sunpaw, but she obviously couldn't multitask very well and kept tripping over branches, so she gave up. Their path was lit by StarClan's moon. They were almost at the StarCave.

The StarCave was a massive gap in the rocks at the base of the mountain. The moon shone directly down on them through a sort of tunnel up the middle of the cave roof. In the centre there were two large stalagmites, flattened at the top. Perfect for the leaders to sit on. Cold and damp, the cave would not usually be inviting to any cat. Water trickled from the roof, and the floor was covered in puddles.

Approaching warily, Skypaw knew there was other cats inside instantly. Not only did her nose tell her so, but she could hear them. The HeatClan cats were loud, and it sounded like there were plenty

of them.

Mudstar led the way in. The weird fluttery feeling she had when she was nervous had returned, and she was glad she was near the back of the group and didn't have to go in first.

Bright and beautiful, the moon was in the perfect position to start the gathering. "You're late, ColdClan. StarClan is waiting!" The cat who had spoken was Foxstar, who was impatiently pacing up and down at the bottom of his stalagmite.

"Foxstar, my old friend," Mudstar replied calmly. "We are not late, you're just incredibly early, as always. But enough with that. StarClan shines upon us now, and we should start the gathering, as we're all here." He leapt up onto the stalagmite and curled his tail around his body. Foxstar shrugged and did the same - the only difference being that he had his deputy, the beautiful Dovefeather, sat at the base.

Whilst the leaders sorted themselves out and talked to each other for a moment, Skypaw took the opportunity to find Marshfoot. She beckoned to Sunpaw to follow, and the ginger she-cat did so happily. Looking left then right, there was no sign of the medicine cat. A HeatClan warrior appeared in front of them, making Skypaw jump a little. The tom had black fur with white splashes, and was absolutely huge.

"Are you Skypaw?" He asked calmly, his gold eyes bore into her own.

"I am. Who wants to know?" She replied, also trying to keep her cool.

"My name is Sootsplash. I am Marshfoot's brother. He asked me to give you a message, as he has to stay at out camp and look after one of our sick elders, Twigjaw."

Yes, Skypaw could see the resemblance now. The brothers shared the same coloured and shaped eyes, and they both had that stare that enticed you. Apart from that, you wouldn't have said they were brothers just looking at them.

"Marshfoot says to meet him on the border a moon from now. Don't worry, I won't tell anybody. I'm more loyal to my brother than anything else." He bent his head in respect and then disappeared among the crowd.

Skypaw frowned momentarily, but she knew that if Marshfoot trusted his brother, she could too.

"We'd better go sit with our clan." Sunpaw muttered. The two she-cat moved through the shadows of the back of the cave, until they sat with their own clan. Perfectly on time, Mudstar and Foxstar decided to start.

"I shall speak first." Foxstar's bossy side shone through. The large ginger tom looked weak compared to Mudstar, as if he had been suffering "My clan are thriving. We have healthy kits and new apprentices. Unfortunately, our medicine cat Stonepool died from greencough. May StarClan accept him for the cat we all knew he was. Marshfoot is our new medicine cat, and his apprentice is Ivypaw."

There were murmurs of appreciation for the old medicine cat. *You're not doing as well as you make out.*. Skypaw thought. *If a cat died from greencough, surely HeatClan was suffering?*

Nearby, a HeatClan she-cat gossiped to another member of her clan. "I heard Foxstar lost a life due to that same greencough Stonepool died from." She whispered. "He isn't going to tell those ColdClan cats though, he's not a fool." Skypaw perked her ears. So Foxstar had lost a life? Why, she would tell Mudstar when they were home.

"We have three new apprentices. Applepaw, Cherrypaw and Reedpaw have all reached six moons. Their mentors are Coldfrost, Dustfire and Vinepuddle."

HeatClan cats called the apprentices' names. Some ColdClan cats joined in, but most just waited for Foxstar to finish so their own leader could speak.

"Finally, we have a new warrior. Sootsplash was a brilliant apprentice, and we know he will serve his clan as an amazing

warrior now... There is one more thing I need to mention; my clan have been threatened for the past moon by dogs from the two-legs' camp. However, recently Marshfoot has been sent dreams from StarClan. In the dream, a sage bush was blowing in the breeze. He believes that our two kits, Sagekit and Breezekit are part of a prophecy and will save us from the dogs."

What!? Skypaw frowned. *They'd had a prophecy too?*

Surprised, Mudstar began to speak. "That is strange, Foxstar, for we have also been threatened by mountain lions and StarClan has sent *u*s two prophecy cats as well - Stonekit and Fishkit."

Cats began to shout in agitation. Why was this happening to both the clans? Suddenly, Larkwing spoke above the noise. Both Mudstar and Foxstar hushed their clans to hear what she had to say.

"Clan leaders, if I may. I believe there is a reason for us both to have threats like these, and for us both to have prophecy kits. I think that StarClan may be preparing us for something bigger - something the clans may have to work together on."

Dipping her head, she moved back among the shadows once more.

"Perhaps Larkwing is right, but for now, my clan are my priority. I hope you solve your mountain lion problem." The tom let on no signs of actually caring about the ColdClan cats. *Heartless foo*l, Skypaw thought.

"I shall continue." Mudstar said. "In my clan, we have a new elder. Gorseface was attacked by mountain lions and has lost all feeling in his back legs. He strongly opposed to being moved to the elders den, but there is no way he could hunt or fight in the condition he is in. He served us well as a warrior, and he shall rest till the end of his life."

Some cats of HeatClan looked upset, as Gorseface had been popular at gatherings for his jokes and his wit.

"We also have new warriors and apprentices. Mistheart and Magpiefur passed their tests with flying colours, and are now

warriors. Echopaw, Lilypaw and Rosepaw are all now apprentices, mentored by Cloudmask, Clearwhisker and Berrystep. Plus, we have two new healthy kits, Robinkit and Heronkit. Their parents, Mousecloud and Webfall, are very happy. That is all."

The same she-cat who had been talking to her friend earlier spike again. "Nothing about them kicking out that poor Cloudmask. I bet they're feeling too guilty to even mention his name!"

So Marshfoot had been right. The clan cats believe that Cloudmask was exiled from ColdClan.

Skypaw had a lot to talk to Marshfoot about, and she wasn't sure if she could wait half a moon to do so. As the gathering dispersed into the night, Skypaw looked back into the StarCave. Her eyes fell upon Sootsplash, the huge warrior sat alone in the darkness. What was the tom doing? His clan mates had mostly gone...

Suddenly, a brown she-cat appeared by his side. Her mother! As she was pushed and shoved as the cats got ready to leave, the last thing she saw was her mother speaking with Sootsplash.

Skypaw's heart missed a beat. How many secrets could Berrystep and Cloudmask keep? What was their obsession with HeatClan? One thing was certain. Skypaw couldn't trust anyone except her sister.

10. Sunpaw

Sunpaw was vaguely aware of something sharp prodding her in the back. It did it once, then twice, then three times, each one more forcefully than the last. The gathering had made her so tired she had basically collapsed in the medicine cat den. Now, something was disturbing her slumber.

Eyes fluttering, she slowly awoke. The prodding stopped as she moved. Sunpaw opened her eyes and came face to face with her mentor, Larkwing. Grinning, the she-cat prodded her again.

"I'm awake, I'm awake, I yield!" Sunpaw joked, attempting to get up but falling over groggily.

"Oh, yes. Totally awake." The fluffy she-cat rolled her eyes and turned to pick up something. "I brought you some fresh-kill. I thought it may tempt you to wake up."

*Mm*h, Sunpaw sniffed the air. *She's brought me rabbit. My favourite!* Taking a bite out of the plump bunny, Sunpaw gulped the food down. It warmed her belly and woke her up enough so that she could stand up. "I'll finish this outside, Larkwing. Thank you for bringing me it."

"My pleasure," Larkwing began. "I need you to fetch me some herbs later. When you're ready, come back to me and I'll tell you what I need."

Sunpaw nodded in reply and picked up the rabbit. It was a dull day; the sun was covered by grey clouds. When it did get a chance to shine through, it only lasted for a few moments and it wasn't very warm due to the breeze. Spiderpaw appeared by her side, his long legs making him slightly taller than Sunpaw.

"Morning, Sunpaw." He said as he looked through the fresh-kill.

"Hey, Spiderpaw... Care to share this rabbit with me?" She pushed it

towards him with her paws.

Nodding, the tom crouched next to her and they ate in silence. That wasn't a problem for Sunpaw. In fact, she enjoyed nothing more than sitting and just being together, unlike her fidgety sister.

"So did you and Skypaw find anything out at the gathering? Y'know... about Cloudmask?" He asked between bites.

Sunpaw checked her surroundings to make sure nobody was listening. The camp was quieter than usual, for the cats were either still asleep or hunting. "A cat named Sootsplash told us to meet his brother half a moon from now at the border, near the two-leg place I believe. We'll get answers then."

Contemplating what Sunpaw had said, Spiderpaw took a moment before replying. "You two she-cats going to be okay on your own? I mean, I could come for extra numbers an protection. It'd be mousebrained to go near the two-leg place with just the two of you." He paused, looking up at Sunpaw. Oh, that look got her every time. "Plus, you can trust me. I swear by StarClan I won't let anything happen to you or your sister." Cocking his head to one side, he waited for her reply.

Taking a moment to wipe the rabbit blood from her snout, Sunpaw stood up and looked once more at Spiderpaw. "You're right, we shouldn't travel in twos. I'd happily have you along. You've proved loyal so far. If you'll excuse me now, I have medicine cat duties to attend to." That last sentence almost made her heart break. It reminded her of her place in the clan society: she was not allowed kits, she was not allowed a mate, and now she was falling for an apprentice? Tears welling in her eyes, she ran to the medicine cat den and buried her face in her moss bed.

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"So, I need you to get juniper, burdock roots, dandelions and fennel." Larkwing said as she looked through her herb supply. "Foxdung, that wind keeps blowing the cobwebs away! I'll wrap them in some leaves, it should weigh them down."

Sunpaw stood by Mistheart and Magpiefur, trying to absorb what Larkwing was saying. She had been an apprentice with the two pretty she-cats, and they were good friends of hers. Both had expressed an interest in coming with her to find herbs and maybe even hunt at the same time.

"We've got it, Larkwing." Magpiefur's gorgeous black and white fur looked amazing against Sunpaw's boring ginger tabby pelt. "We should go now, as the sunhigh patrol has just returned."

"Good luck!" Larkwing smiled, watching the cats leave.

Sunpaw followed in the shadows of the two warriors, looking around for the herbs Larkwing had asked for. In the distance, she could hear a dog barking. Two-legs often walked them around the base of the mountain, and sometimes in ColdClan's forest. She shivered at the thought of those viscous brutes; if HeatClan were threatened by them, they had every chance of being so too. As they reached the border, Magpiefur came to a halt. The black and white she-cat prized her sense of hearing. It was almost as good as Skypaw's, who had always boasted about her own listening skills. Sunpaw flinched as Magpiefur began to speak.

"Did you hear that?" She asked, her tail wavering from one side to the other.

Mistheart tilted her head. "I didn't hear anything. What was it?"

Sunpaw hadn't heard anything either, but listened more intently. Magpiefur, who had been leading their little group, had come to a dead stop. "I heard a cat yowl, I'm sure I did!"

The other two she-cats glanced at each other in doubt. "Mountain lions?" Sunpaw questioned, searching for an answer of Magpiefur's face.

"No," Magpiefur paused. "It sounded like a clan cat; not from our clan, though."

Trekking quickly through the dense undergrowth towards where Magpiefur could hear the sound, Sunpaw and Mistheart finally

heard the cat yowls. It sounded as though the cats were in battle, and Sunpaw felt afraid that the mountain lions were taking more lives.

A shock fell upon their eyes as they reached the epicentre of the noise. Standing there looked scared but relieved was two mangy cats. Both had unhealthy, muddy pelts and battle scars. The big mottle brown tom had a large scar on his back leg, and the dusty coloured she-cat looked shocked out of her skin. As Sunpaw took in her surroundings, she saw a massive mountain lion laying dead on the floor. Both it's eyes were gauged out and fatal wounds covered his flank.

The tom began to hiss at the clan cats, and instantly, Magpiefur and Mistheart got into defensive positions. Their fur was raised and they advanced with their tails raised.

"Why are you on our territory?" Magpiefur hissed through gritted teeth.

Mistheart was shoulder to shoulder with Magpiefur. "This part of the forest belongs to ColdClan! What are a pair of rogues like you doing here, can't you smell our borders?" Sunpaw noticed that both the ColdClan warriors had their claws sheathed. She glanced at the rogues to see their reactions.

Defensively, the huge tom was standing in front of the smaller she-cat. Sunpaw eyed them up. Although unhealthy, the cats were big and strong. The she-cat's belly was round, and that was the moment Sunpaw realised the she-cat was pregnant.

Bounding forward, she leapt between the two pairs of cats. "Stop!" She cried out, sheathing her own claws. "Mistheart, Magpiefur, we ColdClan cats don't just attack for no reason. Give them a chance to explain; they killed that mountain lion, can't you see? Plus, the she-cat is expecting kits." She turned to the rogues, allowing them to speak.

Not coming out of his defensive position, the tom began to speak. "My name is Buzz and this is my mate Fawn. Yes, she's expecting kits. That's why we're crossing the mountain range. Fawn wanted to

have her kits near two-legs." He laid his tail gently on his mate's back. The she-cat was scared, but looked at Buzz with loving eyes.

Fawn spoke quietly and nervously. "Please, clan cats. We did not realise that we were crossing into your territory. Buzz has no sense of smell." The tom cat shot her a glare.

"You managed to take a mountain lion down just with two cats!?" Mistheart asked, obviously shocked.

Buzz nodded slowly.

"As it is custom of our ancestors, we must take you before our leader." Sunpaw recited what she had learnt from Larkwing. "Do not fear, he is a kind and fair leader. If you would kindly follow us?"

Looking deep into each other's eyes, the rogues seemed to come to the conclusion that there wasn't anything else they could do, and obediently followed Magpiefur. Sunpaw walked beside Fawn. Although dirty, Sunpaw could see the she-cat's beauty and loyalty shining through. This was a she-cat that wouldn't easily leave her mate, and would fight even when her own safety was at risk. Sunpaw respected her for that.

11. Skypaw

Rounding the corner of the camp entrance, Skypaw spotted Rowanpaw sat talking with his mentor, Creekwillow. Recently, Skypaw had been so caught up with all the business about her father that she felt she had neglected their friendship, so trotted over to speak with the brown tom.

"Hey, you two!" Skypaw grinned, touching noses with them both.

Rowanpaw looked genuinely pleased to see her. "Skypaw, we haven't spoken in ages! I've just been in the training hollow with Creekwillow."

The older female seemed happy. "Yes, we have. Rowanpaw's so amazing, I can't believe it. He can do battle moves most of the other

apprentices can't do! I have the right mind to ask Mudstar to make him a warrior now!" Her fluffy tail twitched in the air, waving around in pride.

Anxious, Rowanpaw glanced to the floor. "I'm not that good." He muttered under his breath.

"Nonsense," Creekwillow spoke again. "Mudstar will hopefully test you tomorrow. Now, I must visit my brother Lakeheart, he asked if I wanted to hunt with him. See you later!" With that, she walked away.

Skypaw laid a reassuring tail on Rowanpaw's shoulder blades. Poor Rowanpaw looked like a nervous wreck. With her own eyes, Skypaw had seen how good Rowanpaw was. Although she was slightly older than him, she wouldn't be surprised if Mudstar granted Rowanpaw his warrior name. "Don't worry about it. Creekwillow wouldn't be asking for your test if she didn't think you were up to it. She's an experienced mentor, you have nothing to fear."

Sad eyes met Skypaw's own. The tom was nervously flitting his ears from side to side. "I have a lot to fear. For one, I'd be a warrior before my brothers. Would they ever forgive me?" He paused to look over where Tallpaw and Spiderpaw were sharing tongues. "I would have to move into the warriors den. Who'd look after me in there!? Skypaw, you protect me, you should be the one becoming a warrior."

Frowning, Skypaw licked her paw. "Redflight doesn't think I'm ready yet. He's my mentor, he knows best. Honestly, Rowanpaw, you need to stop doubting yourself!"

Just as Rowanpaw was about to retaliate, Skypaw saw her sister walk back into camp, accompanied by four other cats. The whiff of rogue hit her and her fur prickled. Echopaw ran to her side, also noticing the foreign cats. She glanced at him, worried.

Mudstar appeared in front of Sunpaw's group, anger in his eyes. "Sunpaw, what is the meaning of this!? Why have you brought rogues into our camp?" Mudstar's lithe body reminded Skypaw of

HeatClan cats, however his courage and strength always reminded her why he was their leader.

"Mudstar, please, before you jump to any conclusions." Her sister looked nervous, but spoke with as much confidence as she could find. *Exactly why she's going to be a medicine cat one day,* Skypaw thought. "These two rogues want to get to the two-legs' dens so that Fawn can have her kits. On their way over the mountain, they were attacked by a mountain lion. They managed to kill it, Mudstar!" Sunpaw said lightly, urging the cats to see that the rogues were not going to hurt them.

Their leader looked doubtful. "That's very impressive, but how did you manage to do it?" He addressed the cats directly.

Sunpaw nodded her head at Buzz encouragingly. "Go on Buzz, tell him."

Buzz spoke loud and clear. "Cats of this clan, you are wise and strong. But when fighting the mountain lions, you do not expose their weaknesses, as me and Fawn do. You see, you fight them on the mountain - which the lion knows like the back of it's paw. I killed the mountain lion by drowning it, and giving it a killing blow on the back of the neck."

Murmurs around camp stirred the breeze. Cats talked excitedly. The fact that there was a cat capable of killing the things that had taken so many lives already was daunting.

"Buzz, Fawn, if you did in fact manage to kill a mountain lion, my clan is in your debt. Let us speak in private; there are a few matters of which I wish to discuss." Mudstar pointed to his den with his tail. "Cloudmask, Larkwing, will you join us?"

Skypaw and Sunpaw stood side by side, watching their father's body disappear into the den. "Do you think Mudstar will let them go easily?" Skypaw asked.

Shaking her head, Sunpaw brushed her pelt against her sisters affectionately. "You know Mudstar; he likes to gain something from every event."

Nodding in agreement, Skypaw sat on the floor and began sharing tongues with Sunpaw. The two cats laid together until the sun set; sisters with a bond so magical they were bound by not only blood but emotion.

12. Sunpaw

It seemed as though it'd been a whole moon that the ColdClan cats had been waiting for the leader, deputy, medicine cat and rogues to finish their conversation in Mudstar's den. Sunpaw had been happily watching the kits of ColdClan play with their parents. They were so young and innocent, and had their whole lives ahead of them to choose what they wanted to do. Sunpaw felt slightly burdened by her father's betrayal. Sometimes she wondered that if the clan knew, she'd be judged and also have whatever punishment

her father would have to endure. Skypaw sat next to Sunpaw, however she was not watching the kits. Her eyes were fixated on Rowanpaw, who was battle training with Tallpaw. The two cats moved swiftly and with power, though it was obvious that Rowanpaw was the one controlling the fight. *Being so young but powerful must be strange for him,* Sunpaw thought. She had always wanted to be strong, but she lacked muscle and that was one of the reasons she was a medicine cat.

Fishkit wobbled over to her, the young kit still unsteady on her feet. She had dark blue eyes that reminded Sunpaw of the night, and a silvery grey tabby pelt that floated gently in the wind. Her brother laid in between Mosspelt's paws, tired from tackling his sister.

"Sunpaw?" The young she-cat mewed, tilting her head to one side. Sunpaw looked down at the cat with a smile.

"Greetings, Fishkit. That was some pretty impressive fighting back there, for someone so young!" Licking her head affectionately, Sunpaw felt her tongue rasp against the cat's fur.

Beaming with pride, the she-cat twirled around. "Thank you, Sunpaw! One day, I'm going to be the leader, just like my father." Her ambitious mind reminded Sunpaw of her sister.

"Your father is a great cat!" Sadly, Sunpaw was reminded of her own father. "If you could be as amazing as him, you'd make a leader everyone respects. But you need to get through an apprenticeship first."

Fishkit sighed. "I know, Sunpaw. I'll train hard and carry out all my duties to the best standard!" The kit puffed out her chest.

"You sound like you know exactly what you want to do." Pausing, she looked at the den. Still no sign of the cats. "But remember, keep your options open. You never know what could happen."

Simply nodding, Fishkit ran in the direction of her mother. Skypaw pushed her head into Sunpaw's neck. "You would have made a great mother, if you'd been a warrior."

Quietly turning away, Sunpaw rested her head in her paws. "No regrets, Skypaw. No regrets."

After several more minutes, Larkwing and Cloudmask left the den. Springing to her feet, Sunpaw ran over to her mentor, almost knocking her over. "So, what's going on? What's happening!? Larkwing, tell me!"

Chuckling slightly, Larkwing pushed Sunpaw gently out of her path. She sat in the clearing facing the leaders rock, Sunpaw following behind. "Patience, my dear Sunpaw. Your father will be out any moment now."

Just as she finished her sentence, a lithe dark brown cat left the den. Mudstar! Following in his shadow, Buzz and Fawn looked nervous yet somewhat relieved. Sunpaw guessed Mudstar had decided to show them some kind of mercy; well, that's what she hoped.

Leaping onto his highrock, Mudstar began to speak. "ColdClan cats. You all have seen these rogues in our camp, and you must be wondering why they are here. Well, Sunpaw, Mistheart and Magpiefur did the right thing of bringing them here as prisoners." Prisoners? Sunpaw didn't see them in that way. The rogues were merely paying for their crimes against ColdClan. "Now, these two cats are no longer prisoners. I have an expressed an interest in Buzz and Fawn joining ColdClan, and spreading their knowledge of killing mountain lions to us all; especially to our prophecy kits, Fishkit and Stonekit. If they are to forever rid of us these mountain lions, then they will need to be trained to know how."

Alarmed cries arose from the group of cats. Clearly not trusting the rogues, Riverdew's voice rose above the rest. "Who knows who these cats are? They could be HeatClan spies, for all we know! I say we chase them out!"

"Chasing them out means they could come back. I'd say kill them!" Honeystrike, the pregnant queen, spat on the ground. Before her mate's early retirement to the elder's den, Honeystrike had been a kind cat. Now she was bitter, even though Gorseface had accepted the fact that he was no longer a warrior.

"Silence, all of you! Mudstar is speaking - he is our leader, and if he wishes for these two rogues to stay, then so be it!" Cloudmask shouted, aiming his anger in Riverdew and Honeystrike's direction. Although her father was now a traitor in Skypaw's and Sunpaw's eyes, there was no denying the respect that shrouded him. Instantly, the clan cats quietened, and Mudstar glanced at Cloudmask in thanks. *He's so oblivious to his own deputy betraying him... But then, why would Cloudmask have any need to betray us?*

Mudstar continued to speak. "This is my will. If StarClan do not accept Buzz and Fawn, then perhaps I shall listen to your words. But for now, they are to be a loyal part of this clan. I, Mudstar, leader of ColdClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these rogues. They may not have trained or learnt your ways, but I feel they shall serve the clan faithfully in the future. I commend them to you as a warrior in their turns."

He turned to Buzz and Fawn. The two cats seemed ready, probably because Mudstar had already discussed it with them. "Buzz, Fawn, do you promise to uphold the warrior code, even at the cost of your life?"

Looking at each other and then back to the leader, they both nodded and said "I do."

Smiling, Mudstar continued. "Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Buzz, from this moment you will be known as Stagfoot. Fawn, from this moment you will be known as Fawngaze. Starclan honours your bravery and your knowledge, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ColdClan."

There were mixed emotions amidst the clan. Mistheart and Magpiefur, who had found the rogues, were cheering their names. Riverdew sulked in a corner, and Honeystrike couldn't look anyone in the eye. Unsure of what to do, the two new warriors stepped down and were greeted by their clanmates. Sunpaw was proud to see her mother, her sister and her sister's mentor appearing to have taken the new warriors under their wing.

"That is not all." Mudstar called out, breaking the voices. "Skypaw, Rowanpaw, would you please come up here." Sunpaw's eyes flitted

to her sister. What was going on!?

"Skypaw, Rowanpaw, you have trained well under Redflight and Creekwillow. I have seen you both train recently, and there I, Mudstar, leader of ColdClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turns." He paused to let Skypaw and Rowanpaw, who were both quite shocked, regain their confidence. Sunpaw looked proudly up at her sister, though she was upset that she wasn't being given her full name. Although Rowanpaw was so young, Sunpaw new it was time he became a warrior. Apprenticeship wasn't doing him any good.

"Rowanpaw, Skypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your clan, even at the cost of your life?"

The two young cats nodded enthusiastically. "We do!" They squeaked.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Rowanpaw, from this moment you will be known as Rowanwhisker. Skypaw, from this moment you will be known as Skyleap. StarClan honours your will and your confidence, and we welcome you as full warriors of ColdClan."

This time, every clan cat cheered. Redflight looked proudly up at Skyleap, and Creekwillow did the same. Sunpaw called her sister's name above the others. No matter where her sister went or what she became, she'd always love her. Nothing could break the bonds of siblings.

Allegiances and Relations [three]

MAJOR EVENTS

Both Clans

>> It's been half a moon in the book since the last 'Allegiances and Relations' chapter was posted.

ColdClan

>> News: ColdClan welcomed Buzz and Fawn (now Stagfoot and Fawngaze.)

>> New elders in ColdClan: none.

>> New warriors in ColdClan: Rowanwhisker, Skyleap, Stagfoot and Fawngaze.

>> New apprentices in ColdClan: none.

>> New kits in ColdClan: none.

HeatClan

>> News: HeatClan were attacked by a big dog, but managed to scare it away without any deaths.

>> New elders in HeatClan: none

>> New warriors in HeatClan: Beeface.

>> New apprentices in HeatClan: Pinepaw.

>> New kits in HeatClan: none.

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COLDCLAN

Leader - Mudstar; *male, 52 moons, mate is Mosspelt, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit. (5 lives.)*

Deputy - Cloudmask; *male, 46 moons, mate is Berrystep, daughters are Sunpaw and Skyleap, mentor to Echopaw.*

Medicine Cat - Larkwing; *female, 43 moons, sister of Mosspelt and Berrystep.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Sunpaw; *female, 12 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Skyleap.*

Warriors -

>> Berrystep; *female, 43 moons, mate is Cloudmask, daughters are Sunpaw and Skyleap, sisters are Mosspelt and Larkwing, mentor to Rosepaw.*

>> Redflight; *male, 53 moons, brother of Riverdew.*

>> Riverdew; *male, 53 moons, mate of Clearwhisker, daughter is Magpiefur, brother of Redflight.*

>> Clearwhisker; *female, 50 moons, mate of Riverdew, daughter is Magpiefur, mentor to Lilypaw.*

>> Sandfall; *female, 26 moons, mate of Sootleg, sons are Rowanwhisker, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Sootleg; *male, 32 moons, mate of Sandfall, sons are Rowanwhisker, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Owlfoot; *male, 17 moons, brother of Mousecloud, mentor to Spiderpaw.*

>> Webfall; *male, 23 moons, mate of Mousecloud, adoptive father to Mistheart, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit, mentor to Tallpaw.*

>> Lakeheart*; male, 42 moons, mate of Silvernose, brother of Creekwillow, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

>> Creekwillow*; female, 42 moons, sister of Lakeheart.*

>> Silvernose; *female, 32 moons, mate is Lakeheart, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

>> Mistheart; *female, 13 moons, unknown family, adoptive father is Webfall.*

>> Magpiefur; *female, 13 moons, daughter of Riverdew and Clearwhisker.*

>> Rowanwhisker; *male, 10 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Tallpaw.*

>> Skyleap; *female, 12 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Sunpaw.*

>> Stagfoot; *male, 44 moons, mate is Fawngaze.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mousecloud; *female, 17 moons, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit, mate of Webfall, sister of Owlfoot.*

>> Mosspelt; *female, 43 moons, mate is Mudstar, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit, sisters are Larkwing and Berrystep.*

>> Honeystrike; *female, 27 moons, mate is Gorseface, expecting three kits.*

>> Fawngaze; *female, 23 moons, expecting three kits, mate is Stagfoot.*

Kits -

>> Fishkit; *female, 3 moons, brother is Stonekit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

>> Stonekit; *male, 3 moons, sister is Fishkit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

>> Robinkit; *male, 2 moons, brother is Heronkit, parents are*

Mousecloud and Webfall.

>> Heronkit; *male, 2 moons, brother is Robinkit, parents are Mousecloud and Webfall.*

Apprentices -

>> Spiderpaw; *male, 10 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Rowanwhisker and Tallpaw, mentor is Owlfoot.*

>> Tallpaw; *male, 10 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spiderpaw and Rowanwhisker, mentor is Webfall.*

>> Echopaw; *male, 7 moons, sisters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Cloudmask.*

>> Lilypaw; *female, 7 moons, sister is Rosepaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Clearwhisker.*

>> Rosepaw; *female, 7 moons, sister is Lilypaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Berrystep.*

Elders -

>> Shadeshell; *male, 82 moons, brother of Smokepelt.*

>> Smokepelt; *male, 82 moons, brother of Shadeshell.*

>> Gorseface; *male, 32 moons, mate is Honeystrike, ex-mentor to Tallpaw, early retirement because of damaged hind legs.*

HEATCLAN

Leader - Foxstar; *male, 46 moons, mate is Jaypelt, son is Pinepaw, mentor to Wolfpaw. (6 lives.)*

Deputy - Dovefeather; *female, 39 moons, mate is Coldfrost, daughter is Beeface, sister of Rabbitnose.*

Medicine Cat - Marshfoot; *male, 13 moons, brother is Sootsplash parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Ivypaw; *female, 7 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Reedpaw.*

Warriors -

>> Goldheart; *male, 51 moons, mate of Beechpelt, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash, mentor to Beepaw.*

>> Beechpelt; *female, 40 moons, mate of Goldheart, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash.*

>> Rabbitnose; *female, 39 moons, mate of Mintstep, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw, mentor to Pinepaw.*

>> Mintstep; *male, 52 moons, mate of Rabbitnose, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw.*

>> Coldfrost; *male, 42 moons, mate of Dovefeather, daughter is Beeface, mentor to Applepaw.*

>> Bearleap; *male, 52 moons, brother of Briartail.*

>> Briartail; *female, 52 moons, sister of Bearleap, mentor to Ashpaw.*

>> Nettlepelt; *male, 28 moons, mate of Swallowfeather, daughters are Reedkit and Ivykit.*

>> Vinepuddle; *male, 44 moons, mentor to Reedpaw.*

>> Dustfire; *male, 32 moons, mate of Mapleheart, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit, mentor to Cherrypaw.*

>> Grassflower*; female, 42 moons, daughter is Ashpaw, son is Wolfpaw.*

>> Sootsplash; *male, 13 moons, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt, brother is Marshfoot.*

>> Swallowfeather; *female, 25 moons, mate of Nettlepelt, daughters are Reedpaw and Ivypaw.*

>> Beeface; *female, 12 moons, parents are Dovefeather and*

Coldfrost.

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mapleheart; *female, 26 moons, mate of Dustfire, daughter is Breezekit, son is Sagekit.*

>> Jaypelt; *female, 38 moons, mate of Foxstar, son is Pinepaw.*

Kits -

>> Breezekit; *female, 5 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, brother is Sagekit.*

>> Sagekit; *male, 5 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, sister is Breezekit.*

Apprentices

>> Wolfpaw; *male, 11 moons, mother is Grassflower, sister is Ashpaw, mentor is Foxstar.*

>> Ashpaw; *female, 11 moons, mother is Grassflower, brother is Wolfpaw, mentor is Briartail.*

>> Reedpaw; *female, 7 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Ivypaw, mentor is Vinepuddle.*

>> Cherrypaw; *female, 7 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, brother is Applepaw, mentor is Dustfire.*

>> Applepaw*; male, 7 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, sister is Cherrypaw, mentor is Coldfrost.*

>> Pinepaw; *male, 6 moons, parents are Foxstar and Jaypelt, mentor is Rabbitnose.*

Elders -

>> Twigjaw; *female, 81 moons, mother of Grassflower.*

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ROGUES/LONERS/KITTYPETS

>> Rustfire; *male, 55 moons, ColdClan cat turned kittypet.*

(c) of the names to me, idea comes from Erin Hunter's work.

13. Skyleap

"Morning, my new warriors!"

A voice cracked through Skyleap's silence as she opened her eyes, blinking as the bright sun hit her face. There was a chill in the air, and she realized she wasn't asleep in the apprentice den, or any den for that fact. In front of her face stood Mudstar, his sparkling blue eyes bearing into her own. She finally remembered where she was; she had been sitting vigil all night alongside Rowanwhisker, Stagfoot and Fawngaze because they had their new warrior names! The other warriors all seemed to have awoken. Rowanwhisker stood next to her stretching his brown tabby body. He nodded to Skyleap as she glanced at him.

"A good night, yes?" Mudstar asked. "I hope you didn't sleep too much, this is a vigil you know!"

The cats chuckled, but Skyleap became serious when she remembered what day it was. Today was the day she met with Marshfoot, the day she learnt about her father's treachery. Part of her was sad, for she longed for her father to be innocent. However, the rest of her felt like today would be the day justice would be brought upon their clan. HeatClan needed to know they hadn't

kicked out Cloudmask. It had been him to make that decision.

Before she could continue into the forest to find Marshfoot, her father appeared behind her. Although she couldn't trust him, she missed speaking with him. As a kit, she could not fault her father; he had always had time for her and Sunpaw, even whilst balancing the life of a deputy. Her parents had loved each other dearly, and their daughters had been their main priority.

Now, Berrystep and Cloudmask had drifted apart, leaving their daughters trying to cope in the middle of their two parents. Berrystep's kindness against Cloudmask's stubbornness could no longer function together.

"Skyleap, as a warrior, there is a lot expected of you. You must follow the warrior code with your life." He paused, his black and white fur looked bright in the sun's rays.

Skyleap pressed her nose to her father's. He didn't back away, but he didn't return the act either. "I know, Cloudmask. You and Berrystep brought us up well, we know what we need to do and we are loyal to our clan." *Unlike some*, she thought.

Nodding gently, Cloudmask continued. "I-er, I want you to know that your mother and I are very proud of you. We know you'll make a great warrior. Now, I'd like you and Rowanwhisker to show Stagfoot the borders."

"Thank you, Cloudmask. I won't let you down." Skyleap felt guilty. At that very moment she had been about to betray her own father. Perhaps there was a reason for Cloudmask's betrayal? *No, not if Marshfoot had something important to tell her. I need to start putting the clan first. My father is a traitor.*

With a sigh, Skyleap wandered over to where Rowanwhisker sat cleaning himself. She paused when she reached him, taking a moment to reflect on the previous events. Being warriors, Skyleap and Rowanwhisker would be busy, and probably would have less time to be together. Although slightly upset, Skyleap knew that that was the warrior way; though it had driven a wedge between her own parents.

"Hey, you, new warrior, why 'ya sat around doing nothing?" She joked, Rowanwhisker looking startled as he thought one of the senior warriors had been telling him off. He stood up and pressed his black, wet nose to her own.

"You scared me!" He chuckled, his voice lifted her spirits. "You're looking very beautiful this morning. What does the warrior she-cat want with me?" Cocking his head to one side, he awaited her response. She felt her cheeks warm up under her fur - he had called her beautiful!

"Well, Cloudmask wants us to take Stagfoot out to show him the borders. But Rowanwhisker, we must be quick. There is something I must do before sun-high." Feeling slightly bad about not being able to tell Rowanwhisker what it was, she looked away, in the direction of her sister's medicine cat den.

Rowanwhisker simply nodded, not wanting the details for why she wanted to be quick. "Where's Stagfoot?" He questioned.

A large cat scampered out from the undergrowth. "I'm here! Sorry, I'm not late am I? Cloudmask only just told me what was going on!"

Giving a hearty laugh, Rowanwhisker laid his tail across Stagfoot's shoulders. "My friend, we were awaiting you. Let's get moving, there is much to see!"

Before the cats left the camp, there came a sneer from close to the fresh-kill pile. Unfortunately, there way out was blocked by Riverdew, the only tom in the clan who hadn't seemed to accept Stagfoot and Fawngaze's arrival.

"Where are you taking the *rogue*? Back to where he belongs, I hope. Those mouse-brained cats would have been better off as kittypets!" He spat on the floor near to where Stagfoot stood, the bigger tom's eyes filling with anger.

Skyleap stepped in, trying to keep the peace. She could fight just as well as either of the toms if she had to, but she kept her claws sheathed. "There's no time for your petty little games, Riverdew. Stagfoot has as much right to be here as any cat. StarClan have not

told us they shouldn't be here, and you should respect our warrior ancestors! Now why don't you go back to being a grumpy, mouse-brained fool and leave the warriors who are actually *doing* something for the clan to get on with it!"

It seemed to have worked, and Riverdew backed down, shocked that Skyleap could speak in such a manner. Even Rowanwhisker and Stagfoot seemed surprised by her notions.

"Thanks, you saved me a lot of trouble back there." Stagfoot whispered to her as they trotted out of camp.

Skyleap nodded her head in respect. "Don't worry about it. I find talking is just as useful as battling - my sister taught me that!"

"Your sister is truly meant to be a medicine cat, isn't she? You can just see it in her eyes..." Rowanwhisker spoke up from the back of their line.

"She is." Skyleap smiled, leading her friends along the cat sized track. "She truly is."

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A short while later, Skyleap found herself almost at the HeatClan borders. Worried they may bump into Marshfoot as it was almost sun-high, she decided she had to get rid of Rowanwhisker and Stagfoot.

"Hey, you two?" The brown pelted tom's turned round to face her.

"What's up?" Rowanwhisker asked, concerned.

Skyleap traced her claw through the mud. "Would it be okay if you went and hunted in the forest? I can re-mark the borders by myself. Plus, I like being out here alone, it's peaceful."

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" Rowanwhisker asked, his brow turning into a frown.

"I don't know HeatClan that well, but I'm pretty sure they'd attack a warrior on their own?" Stagfoot added.

"Oh, boys, be sensible now. It's not like I'm trespassing, is it? Just re-marking the borders. Now go and hunt before I break both your necks." The threat at the end seemed to do it, and the two toms hurried away, only looking back once.

Phew, they're gone. Now to find Marshfoot. He should be near the snake rocks, she thought. *Gotta' look out for snakes this time, we don't want a repeat of last time*! She shook away the thought before heading east.

When she reached the snake rocks, there was no cat to be seen, let alone Marshfoot. With a sigh, she crossed the border into HeatClan territory. Still no sign of anyone.

It was peaceful and beautiful sitting on the snake rocks and looking down at the desert plain. From here, she could see as far as the two-leg place, plus the HeatClan territory. Turning around and looking up the mountain, she found it difficult to see the snow covered top, and had to strain her eyes as the clouds shifted over it.

A voice broke into her thoughts, and Marshfoot appeared. "Skypaw!" He cried out, running over to her and pressing his nose into her flank.

"Marshfoot!" She sang, overjoyed. "Oh, but it's Skyleap now." She giggled as she corrected him.

"Congratulations! It seems like forever since we met, and I haven't stopped thinking about you.. or you father." He sat next to her, leaning into her slightly.

"And you have news?"

"I do. Are you sure you want to here it, Skypa- Skyleap? It's not something that can easily be forgotten." He looked into her eyes with concern and a slight uneasiness.

Skyleap nodded, pushing slightly deeper into Marshfoot's flank. "Tell me, Marshfoot. I need to have some closure."

Nodding, Marshfoot began. "Your father is-.."

There was a yowl from the behind them, and the two cats spun

round to see none other than the HeatClan deputy, Dovefeather, staring them straight in the eyes. She was accompanied by a warrior Skyleap knew to be Coldfrost, and his apprentice Applepaw. Although extremely beautiful, Dovefeather was malevolent and power hungry. She had been influenced heavily by Foxstar and never showed mercy to any cat straying onto their territory, be it a clan cat, kittypet or rogue.

"Marshfoot?" She hissed, almost spitting in face. "What is the meaning of this meeting?"

Still in shock, Marshfoot found it difficult to reply. Dovefeather's eyes burned with fury at the medicine cat's betrayal.

"You haven't told her all our clan's secrets, have you?" The she-cat advanced, her claws sheathed. She directed her anger to Skyleap. "You're just a kit, anyway. I could take you on in battle and win *easily*." Dovefeather hissed.

Skyleap sheathed her own claws. Never had she had to fight a HeatClan cat before, but if she was going to ever had to, maybe now was the time. "If you think you can take me, come and get me!" She mocked threateningly.

Dovefeather flew at Skyleap, her teeth attempting to sink into her neck. Instinctively ducking, Skyleap rolled away, remembering her training with her beloved mentor Redflight. She crouched and took a low blow at Dovefeather, trying to draw blood from the cat's belly. She missed, but instead managed to drag her claws down the inside of her leg. Dovefeather let out a little cry, but the blood did not run enough to even make her stumble. The two she-cats circled each other.

"Whose side are you on, Marshfoot!?" The deputy cried out, not taking her focus from Skyleap.

Marshfoot looked scared for Skyleap, but seemed fixated on Coldfrost. The tom had his own ideas and was tackling Skyleap alongside Dovefeather now. Applepaw tried to get her own blow, but Skyleap knocked the young apprentice back with her hind legs.

Skyleap was hopelessly pinned down, struggling to break free. Dovefeather chuckled. "How should I finish you off, you piece of foxdung? Perhaps a quick death.. no, you're not worthy of it. Maybe I shall throw you off the cliff edge. We'll see if the pretty kitty can fly, shall we?"

Pain shot through her hind legs as she noticed Coldfrost clawing away. "I reckon we should make it slow and painful, it's more fun that way.." A smirk played across his jaws.

"Don't you dare hurt her!" Marshfoot hissed, his wild cat instincts suddenly kicking in and his medicine cat code disappearing. He bowled Coldfrost out the way easily; the two toms were engaged in a manic flurry of claws and teeth, and Skyleap was back on her feet in a second. She raced towards Dovefeather, who knocked into her and sent her flying. With a hiss, Skyleap felt pain throughout her body, but got up anyway. As the cat tried to launch herself at Skyleap again, she ducked. Dovefeather let out a scream as she realized what the she-cat had done, and she went tumbling over the cliff edge. Coldfrost watched, frozen solid, as his deputy and mate fell to her death.

Suddenly, she was surrounded by HeatClan cats. She began to lose consciousness, and was only aware of Marshfoot screaming her name. Someone had her by the scruff of her neck, and she was dragged along the burning sand half dead.

14. Sunpaw

Ambling slowly along the edge of the stream, Sunpaw picked her way carefully to cross it. After what happened to Rosekit all those moons ago, she had learnt to be more careful around it - she respected the water now. On the other side, her mentor stood waiting her. Larkwing's beautiful long fur blew gently in the breeze, and the scenery around her added to her beauty. Sunpaw joined her side and the two set off up the mountain together. Today, they had to find some poppy seeds, as they were running seriously low. With a slight spring in her step, she followed her mentor.

When the two she-cats reached the area where they usually got poppy seeds, Larkwing paused and looked out. They had a good view as they were above the tree line, and the clouds were still above them.

"This place always brings back memories." Larkwing whispered, more to herself than to Sunpaw.

Gently pressing her head into Larkwing's fluffy chest, Sunpaw let out a little sigh. "Its so beautiful up here, I wish I could stay here forever watching the world go by."

"As do I, my little apprentice." The medicine cat rested her chin on Sunpaw's head. "Sunpaw, there is something I've been meaning to speak to you about."

Gingerly, Sunpaw turned her head so she was looking Larkwing straight in the eyes. For a moment, there was pain in the yellow eyes of her mentor, but it quickly clouded over and left the calm contentedness that the medicine cat always seemed to have. She always knew what she was doing, and sometimes Sunpaw doubted her abilities to ever be as good as Larkwing's.

"Its about you and Spiderpaw, my dear Sunpaw." Knowing that the topic would be painful for Sunpaw to discuss, Larkwing laid her tail over Sunpaw's back.

"What about him, Larkwing?"Sunpaw tried to show no emotion. Larkwing wasn't being fooled.

"Any cat can see the relationship you two have; he adores you, Sunpaw."

"Oh Larkwing, I don't know what to do. I think.. I think I love him, but the warrior code states that.."

"I know what the warrior code says!" Larkwing snapped, Sunpaw seeing a fiery side to her that she'd never seen before. The little apprentice looked away, upset that her mentor had spoken to her like that.

Sunpaw turned away, looking back at the beautiful view once more. Her heart lay with Spiderpaw, but her mind told her that Larkwing wanted her to be the best medicine cat for ColdClan. She had to fill her mentor's wishes, or else she'd make not only Larkwing and the clan unhappy, but herself.

Larkwing seemed to have latched on to Sunpaw's sadness, and sighed. "Look, Sunpaw. I love you like my own daughter, and therefore I shall tell you this because that is so. Once, when I was Larkpaw, I myself loved a warrior."

Surprised, Sunpaw's mouth opened slightly. "You did!? But Larkwing, you've always been so faithful to the warrior code!"

"Not always, Sunpaw. Before you were born, there was a brown tom living in the clan. My, he was terribly handsome, and all the she-cats adored him. However, he wanted the one thing the warrior code said he couldn't have. He wanted me." Placing her paw on Sunpaw's, Larkwing continued. "I was madly in love with the tom, and when I got my full warrior name, I used to ask him to help me collect herbs. After my mentor's death, I fell pregnant with the tom's kits. When the clan found out about them, they blamed me and threatened to banish me from the clan. Goosestar was leader then, and he did not have as much mercy as Mudstar does now. When I thought my life was over, the tom saved me. He told he clan he had forced himself on me and that it was not my fault. Goosestar turned his anger to the tom and almost killed him. He escaped only just

with his life. He came back to me a few moons later to see his kits. We met secretly here. Two of our kits were dead; perhaps murdered by those who did not believe they should be in the clan. The one who did survive, Lightkit, left with my mate to save her life." Larkwing looked so upset, Sunpaw wanted to wrap her tail around her mentor's body and not let go.

"Have you ever seen them again?" Sunpaw asked quietly.

Larkwing blinked away tears. "I-I visited the two-leg place a few moons after you were born. My kit was no longer using her warrior name, and my mate told me how much he preferred the kittypet life to that of a warrior."

There was a lot of pain in Larkwing's eyes, as if she had never truly let go of this mysterious tom. Plus, Larkwing had a kit. Somewhere in the world, a cat had grown up without knowing how amazing it's mother could be. Sunpaw reflected silently on her and Larkwing's relationship.

A branch cracking in two broke the silence, and the two she-cats' fur prickled. Tipping her head trying to see around the bush, Sunpaw attempted to get a look at what was coming. It had sounded to heavy to be a clan cat, and Larkwing must have agreed as she was on her feet. Eyes fixated on the bush, Larkwing stalked forward, her long fur brushing the ground. Although the cat was a medicine cat, she seemed to have the courage of a warrior.

When Larkwing reached the edge of the shrubbery, she stopped. Sunpaw could hear nothing, but she didn't dare creep closer. Larkwing's ears flitted from one side to the other.

"Sunpaw, run!" She screamed, all of a sudden.

There was a deep growl from the bush, before a massive mountain lion leapt out from a hunting crouch. The big cat had been stalking Larkwing and Sunpaw like prey!

Her eyes as round as the moon, Sunpaw let out a squeal of horror. Larkwing was backing away, crouching low. Flinging a swipe at Larkwing, the she-cat tried to scrape the mountain lion's belly in

retaliation. However, her efforts were in vain and she was simply swiped to one side, hitting her head on the rocks nearby.

It was then that the mountain lion advanced on Sunpaw. Her tail hung between her legs and she let out whimpers, almost like a scolded dog. Every step closer seemed like a step closer to death, and Sunpaw preyed to StarClan for a miracle.

To no avail, her prayers failed. The little ginger she-cat's body trembled as the mountain lion's teeth bared only a mouse-length away from her face.

Just as the mountain lion attempted to crush Sunpaw's head with his teeth, Larkwing seemed to fly from nowhere and jammed a branch between the big cat's jaws. "I thought I told you to run!" The medicine cat shouted angrily, as the mountain lion tried to bite down on the branch.

Finally, the big cat crushed the branch and turned back to the she-cats. Larkwing's plan had only slowed their death, not made it inevitable!

"Grab a stone." Larkwing instructed, an urgent tone in her voice. The mountain lion was lumbering over to them, shaking it's head to get rid of the strange, painful feeling it felt. Sunpaw did as she was told, and gripped a large rock beneath her jaws.

Through her stone, Larkwing spoke. "When he comes close with his jaws open again, throw the stone as hard as you can down his throat."

Nodding, Sunpaw braced herself. They had only a few moments to regain their strength. Soon, the lion was upon them once more.

"Wait," Larkwing whispered.

Ambling forwards, the lion focused on Sunpaw and staggered towards her, still dizzy.

"One more fox-length... Now!" The two she-cats threw their stones with all their might, for it was their lives they were fighting for. Larkwing's stone hit it's target, and went straight down the gullet of

the mountain lion. Sunpaw's rock was slightly off, but hit him straight in the forehead and gave him a killing blow.

Choking on the rock, the lion crumbled down to the floor, it's legs giving way beneath it. Larkwing and Sunpaw were pushed up close next to each other, both panting and both shaking. As the mountain lion let out it's final breath and it's eyes turned stone like, the cats breathed again.

"Larkwing.. we.. we killed it! Together, we did it!" Sunpaw's chest was injured and bleeding, but she was so pleased she forgot the pain and pushed further into Larkwing's side, her nose on her mentor's chest.

When she drew away, she realised she had blood on the end of her nose. Larkwing was wheezing and was definitely in pain, though was trying not to show it. "You're injured!" Sunpaw cried out, attempting to lick at the wound.

"So it seems." Larkwing said through a raspy breath. She tried to walk forward, but like the lion, stumbled and fell to her knees. She slowly laid on her side, resting. Sunpaw was still frantically licking, though she could feel the tears welling in her eyes and dampening Larkwing's blood stained fur.

"Its going to be okay, Larkwing, you'll see. We'll go back to camp and tell them all how we slayed another mountain lion threat, and we'll be heroes, yes? Larkwing?" Through her clouding eyes, Sunpaw could see Larkwing fading away. The usual kindness was drifting into that eternal sleep they called death, and Sunpaw nosed at her mentor, trying to keep her awake.

"Sun-Sunpaw. Listen to.. to me." Larkwing's tail found Sunpaw's and they entwined them, sharing that unbreakable bond.

Letting out a whimper, Sunpaw shook her head. "No. No! No last words yet, Larkwing! Please! You have to survive.. for me! I can't do this on my own..."

Trying to smile, Larkwing's breathing got deeper. "Yes you can, Sunpaw. You're so capable of so much. Y-you're going to be an

amazing medicine cat, I just know it. I'm glad my final moments are spent with the cat who is like the daughter I never got to watch grow up."

Sunpaw's eyes were too misty to see anything clearly now, and her thoughts were all so painful, she couldn't cope. Bursting out into cries of pain, Sunpaw tried to lick her mentor's face. Larkwing pushed her away.

"I can see StarClan, Sunpaw. They're calling me. I can see Dawnstar, and Runningpelt.. I can see their kits! Oh, they are so happy together. There's Greysplash and Ashstone too, standing side by side like the brave warriors we knew." Larkwing seemed so distant the Sunpaw wanted to scream at her and bring her back to the living.

"Sunpaw? The-the tom's name was Rustfire. If you ever see him, tell him I love him and Lightkit..." Silence consumed Larkwing's body. The world stopped for a moment, and everything spun around Sunpaw making her dizzy. She didn't feel anything except pain, and the burning tears that heated her eyes. She laid next to her mentor, shaking her slightly, repeating *no, no, no.*

It was no use. Larkwing, her beloved mentor and 'mother', was in StarClan's paws now.

"Treat her well!" Sobbed Sunpaw. "I will not let her sacrifice be for nothing."

15. Skyleap

The smell of fear ran through Skyleap's nostrils, and she couldn't quite decide if it was her own or another cat's. Her head was spinning and she couldn't open her eyes, so she simply shifted her body, trying to smell and hear her surroundings.

Firstly, her nose picked up on a scent that made her writhe in disgust. It was the scent of HeatClan,the cats she hated. Then, after a few moments, she heard a recognisable voice which lifted her spirits.

"She's alive... She's waking up!" It was Marshfoot. Skyleap longed to see him with her own eyes, but it still was too painful.

"Don't startle her now. Let her wake at her own pace." That was the voice of a tom she did not know. He did not smell like HeatClan... In fact, he smelt of kittypet! Skyleap wrinkled her nose in disgust, the stench of two-leg eating away at her sense of smell.

She let out a mew of pain, but thankfully her eyes began to open and her surroundings poured into her vision. At first, everything around her was hazy. Darkness and light mixed together in a strange fusion that confused her. As the mist began to clear, she began to make out the shapes of the two toms, and the place they were in.

She was laid against the cool walls of an underground desert cave. Above her were stairs leading out of the cave, but the exit was blocked by branches woven together. *Those HeatClan cats have put me in prison!* Skyleap thought to herself. She could just about see two cat's guarding the exit to their cave, and if she stood on the stairs, she could see the whole HeatClan camp.

Feebly attempting to get up, Skyleap staggered forwards and collided with Marshfield, who steadied her gently. "Woah, Skyleap. Take it easy, those HeatClan cats really put up a fight."

Memories of the previous afternoon entered her mind. The last thing she remembered was a light grey cat screaming - Dovefeather. "Di-did I kill Dovefeather?" She asked, her voice wobbling.

The tom's voice came from behind her again, and she slowly turned round to face the mysterious figure. "You did, the HeatClan cats have been mourning all night. They buried her at dawn."

You killed a cat. How do you feel? Skyleap asked herself, her head still swimming. *Guilty? No. You cannot feel guilt, it is a weak emotion.*

"Who are you, kittypet?" Skyleap asked, cautiously taking a step closer.

The fire coloured tom stood up. "I am Rustfire. HeatClan have held me prisoner here for a whole moon now, because I strayed onto their territory."

"That's HeatClan for you." Muttered Marshfoot.

"They're your clan!" Retorted Skyleap angirly, spinning round to face Marshfoot.

"If I had a choice, I wouldn't have been born here!" He hissed in reply, his eyes fiery.

Rustfire leapt between them. "Stop this, both of you! You're acting like kits!"

Skyleap turned away from the toms. She didn't feel well and her body wasn't fully recovered. Plus, her heart longed for home and the comfort of her family. Curling up in a ball in the corner of the cave, she tried to shut out the world.

A couple of moments later she was awoken by a massive cat coming down the stairs. It was Sootsplash! Skyleap jumped up happily, as did Marshfoot.

"Sootsplash, am I glad to see you!" Marshfield said happily, pressing his nose against his brother's. Sootsplash dropped a mouse and a thrush at their feet.

"Greetings, brother. Skypaw, it's good to see you." The big cat flicked his tail in her direction.

"Oh, Sootsplash, it's good to see you too. I'm Skyleap now, though." She added. "Thank you for bringing us food."

"It was all I could get, I'm sorry it's not much. Foxstar is still deciding what to do with you. Coldfrost really hates you for killing his mate. His anger is unstoppable.. Don't tell the clan, but I'm impressed you managed to fight her off, she's a tough opponent. Or she was..." He trailed off awkwardly.

"Sootsplash, can you get us out of here?" Skyleap asked with a panicky tone in her voice.

The huge black and white tom shook his head sadly. "As much as I'd love to, I have no power here, and we'd be greatly outnumbered, even with our kittypet friend... no offence."

Rustfire shrugged, laying back down on the floor as calm as the clouds on a summer afternoon. "None taken."

Sootsplash continued. "For now, you'll have to wait for your clan to attack and save you."

Appalled, Skyleap's eyes widened. "More unnecessary deaths!? I didn't want to send Dovefeather to her grave, yet I did. But to send my whole clan to StarClan!? I couldn't risk it. No. Somehow, we need to get out of here of our own accord."

With a gentle nod of understanding, Sootsplash turned and walked back up the steps. "I know you'll think of something, Skyleap. You have a strange air about you... One that craves others to bow to you as their leader. You're strong; don't let anyone break you." With that, the cat stalked out of the desert cave.

Only a second after he left, there was a yowl from one of the cats guarding the camp. "Cloudmask!" The she-cat called, and instantly HeatClan cats swarmed around the base of the rock, buzzing like bees to a hive.

My father... Skyleap thought, not really knowing what to do. She

climbed the steps and could just see the leader's rock. Marshfoot joined her, silently watching the group of cats.

"Greetings, Cloudmask, it is good to see a friendly face." Foxstar appeared from his den, his reddish fur hinted with amber in the sun. The two toms sat on the leader's rock, greeting each other.

Maybe now I can find out what Cloudmask is coming here for!

"Any news from ColdClan?" An apprentice squeaked from the crowd.

"None, I'm afraid." Her father's voice rang in her ears, for she knew it to well to ignore it. *So he's a spy... but Cloudmask would never do that! It simply wasn't in his nature! There was more to this... She could feel it.*

"We have great news for you. We captured some ColdClan warriors! Unfortunately, one of them managed to kill Dovefeather.." The crowd became angry at the reminder. Foxstar hushed them. "She will be missed by us all. However, this leaves the space of deputy open... Cloudmask, HeatClan would like to formally offer you the place as deputy here. Leave ColdClan, for your family is here now!"

Family? Skyleap tilted her head. Suddenly, a sleek black she-cat stepped out, followed by a brown and white apprentice.

"Both myself and Pinepaw would love for you to join HeatClan. Your place is here, with me as your mate. Your son needs a good mentor, and who better than his father?"

Skyleap nearly screamed. Cloudmask had another family!? How dare he leave her mother, the beautiful Berrystep, and his two daughters. A few tears trickled from her eyes to the floor. Marshfoot sensed her distress and pressed against her. She pulled away from his warmth, but he didn't give up, and eventually, she was buried in his fur. *He can't accept the offer. He's already deputy of ColdClan. He'll come back, realise how much he misses Berrystep, and we'll be a family again...*

She trailed off as Cloudmask nodded his head. "I accept your offer."

HeatClan cats cheered, for Cloudmask appeared to be popular among them. Skyleap's body dropped even further. Marshfoot licked her head, but even his company was not going to bring her father back home.

"Now, may I see these ColdClan cats? I'd like to know which of my old clanmates were so ignorant they couldn't even respect StarClan's laws!" A final cheer came from the crowd before they dispersed back to their duties. Skyleap cowered in the back of the cave, not wanting to confront her father. As the prison was opened, Rustfire and Marshfoot stood up protecting Skyleap.

"Well, well, Marshfoot. You betrayed your own clan, and for what? You were a promising medicine cat. Let me past so I can see for myself who betrayed my clan." He pushed past the two toms, who were helplessly held back by two HeatClan warriors.

At that moment, Skyleap rushed out of the shadows and stood directly in front of her father. Her sadness had turned partly to anger, and her piercing blue eyes were misty.

"No, father! It is you who has betrayed *my* clan! You're a monster!" She screamed at him.

"Skyleap?" He asked quietly, not quite believing his eyes.

"Oh yes, don't you remember me? I'm your daughter, the one who respected you with all of their heart and who longed to be as brilliant a warrior as the stories I had heard about you!" Skyleap shook with anger. "But *oh no*. They were all lies. They were all just a waste of your precious time! Now go on, kill me, do what you please with me, but know this: I am always going to be loyal to my clan, in life and in death." She hissed her final sentence through gritted teeth.

Cloudmask's own face was confused and almost tortured. "Skyleap," he whispered, taking a step forward. "I would never hurt you, nor Sunpaw, nor your mother. But my heart lies with those who need me most, and Jaypelt and Pinepaw need me more than ever. Please, forgive me for doing this. HeatClan is my home now."

Skyleap felt dizzy and sick. "Then you were never the cat I thought you were!" She burst into a flood of sadness and rage, blindly throwing a swing at her father. She was pushed back by the guards, but she kept fighting, and soon Rustfire and Marshfoot caught on to what she was doing. Cloudmask did not hold any of the three cats back as they rushed out the cave. In fact, he called out to his daughter as she raced past. "I love you, Skyleap, like I love Berrystep and Sunpaw! Never forget that!"

HeatClan cats didn't seem to get that their prisoners were escaping till the three cats ran past them. Cloudmask called to some of them, telling them to let them escape. Only a few didn't obey him, one being Dovefeather's mate Coldfrost, whose anger was spiralling out of control.

"We're nearly at the border!" Skyleap called out. When they crossed it, they span around, now on ColdClan territory. Coldfrost had caught up with them and was pacing unhappily near them.

"Don't come any closer, you piece of fox dung! I'll kill you, like I killed Dovefeather!" Rustfire and Marshfoot stood abreast to her, claws out and pawing at the ground.

"I'll leave you be for now, ColdClan scum, but hear my promise: I will make you *pay*. I will make you *suffer*. You'll regret you ever became pregnant when I've got hold of your kits!" With that, the tom turned and ran.

Coward, Skyleap thought. *Hold on a minute, what kits!?* She looked at Marshfoot. "Did you hear what he said? He said I was expecting kits!?"

Marshfoot chuckled, though panting at the same time. "I was wondering when to break the news to you!"

For a moment, the two cats embraced, before Rustfire gave a little cough. "Um, Marshfoot, I hate to bring down the mood, but you're not welcome in either clan."

Skyleap shook her head. "No, he'll be allowed in ColdClan, right Marshfoot?"

The medicine cat tom was silent for a while, before he shook his head. "My clan don't want me, and your clan won't either. If you haven't noticed, they've already got a medicine cat. Larkwing is one of the best."

Nearly crying once more, Skyleap wrapped her tail round Marshfoot's. "But where will you go?"

Marshfoot glanced at Rustfire. That was to be his decision, then. He had chosen the life of a kittypet over their kits. She quietly touched noses with him. "Please don't leave me."

Their eyes met, just as they had done when they had first bumped into each other. The spark was still there, and it was deeper than it had ever been, but something else lingered. Skyleap realised that the lingering emotion was fear.

"Skyleap, when our kits are born, come and find me at the kittypet place. I'll never forget you... Skyleap, I love you."

16. Sunpaw

Sunpaw hadn't shifted from her mentors side since dawn, and dusk was fast approaching. Little sobs still came out of the she-cat, and she shook with anger. A drop of rain fell onto her nose, then another on her back, and as she looked to the clouded sky, she noticed that a storm was slowly rumbling in. Shock made her come back into reality, for she had to get out of the storm to be safe. *I can't just leave Larkwing's body...* She thought.

As if StarClan had heard her, the brothers Spiderpaw and Tallpaw rounded the corner, both carrying a thrush each. When Spiderpaw saw Sunpaw's eyes, he dropped the thrush instantly and ran over. Sunpaw couldn't help it - she raced up to him and buried her face in his fur.

"Sunpaw! What's the matter?" He asked gently.

She could hardly talk so she simply stuttered 'Larkwing' and hoped he understood. He didn't say another word, but glanced at Tallpaw. The other tom walked over to where Sunpaw had been standing, and behind a fallen log, Larkwing lay. Tallpaw gave a little inverted gasp, before looking back at Spiderpaw and gave a small nod. Understanding Sunpaw's sadness, he wrapped his body round her, comforting her as well as sheltering her from the rain. Bending his head in respect, Tallpaw said his last goodbyes.

"Spiderpaw, Sunpaw, we need to get out of here before the storm really hits. Together, we could drag Larkwing's body back to camp. We all need to be strong now." Tallpaw rested his tail on Spiderpaw's back and Sunpaw felt the silent connection between them.

The three apprentices grabbed a scruff of Larkwing's beautiful yet soaked fur. Blinking back tears, Sunpaw pulled her body alongside Spiderpaw and Tallpaw. Together they were quick and arrived back in camp. There wasn't many cats around, except one of Larkwing's two sisters, Berrystep.

"Larkwing?" Sunpaw's mother asked with fear in her voice. As the three apprentices moved away from the body, Spiderpaw still comforting Sunpaw, Berrystep gave a long, broken yowl. She rushed to Larkwing, howling with pain. More cats heard Berrystep's distress, and appeared from the dens. Kits were hurried back inside and apprentices stood next to each other with shock on their faces. Mudstar bolted out of his den, his own pain racing through his body.

Everyone in the clan was hurting. Larkwing had been such a special part of the clan, and now she was gone. She had delivered so many kits, saved so many lives and been there for Mudstar when he needed it most.

"Sunpaw?" Mudstar called her name. She staggered over to him. "We need to talk. In my den, please." She leant on the leader as they made their way to the den.

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Sunpaw had explained everything to Mudstar; how Larkwing had died saving her, and they had killed the mountain lion.

Trying to look brave, Mudstar leapt onto the leader's rock with an effortless bound. He looked dizzy and sick, but spoke like a true leader. "Sunpaw has told me what happened to her and Larkwing. Believe me, it is not a pretty tale, but Larkwing did die saving Sunpaw. That is the Larkwing we all knew and loved, always putting others before herself." He paused as the clan agreed with him. "Her death affects us all, for we all held her dear. But life in ColdClan goes on, and as the mountain lion threat goes, so does our strength! Sunpaw, you will make the journey to the moonstone alone, and receive your medicine cat name there. I know you will be a great medicine cat, just like Larkwing. Before I finish this meeting, I think two other apprentices proved themselves today. Spiderpaw and Tallpaw, you both kept a calm head when you found Sunpaw and Larkwing. You showed true warrior prospect. Would you please come here?"

Shocked, Spiderpaw and Tallpaw made their way up to the leader's rock

"I, Mudstar, leader of ColdClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down at these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn. Spiderpaw and Tallpaw, do you promised to uphold the warrior code and protect and defend your clan even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." The toms said in unison

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Spiderpaw, from this moment you will be known as Spidertail. Tallpaw, from this moment you will be known as Tallnose. StarClan honours your initiative and we welcome you as full warriors of ColdClan."

The clan shouted their names, but there was a sudden commotion at the back of the clan as Skyleap ran in. Sunpaw felt happy to see her sister, and it was only then that she realised how long her sister had been missing.

"Mudstar, I bring news of a betrayal, right in our own clan!" Skyleap stood at the face of the leader's rock, staring up at Mudstar. The clan cats suddenly became agitated, wanting to know who couldn't be trusted.

"Speak, young Skyleap. Tell us what you know." Mudstar nodded at the young warrior.

" Its Cloudmask. He has been betraying the clan! He has a family in HeatClan, and has been telling them our secrets. He cannot be trusted!"

Angrily, the clan shouted abuse at each other, some saying that Skyleap was fox-brained and others saying that she could be right. Mudstar interrupted, trying to keep the peace.

"Skyleap, how do we know you have been telling the truth?"

All of a sudden, Berrystep was at her side, the rain running off her fur. "Mudstar, I have suspected Cloudmask to be a traitor for a while now. I just needed something solid, something that you

couldn't disprove. My daughter would never lie about her father. What would she gain from it?"

"We should wait for Cloudmask's return, and see what he has to say!" Called out Silvernose.

Skyleap shook her head, turning to the clan. "Beloved ColdClan members, your deputy will not be returning. He has decided to stay with HeatClan. I know this because HeatClan took me prisoner, for I killed Dovefeather, their deputy. She attacked me.. I had no choice."

Although the clan was silent, the rain seemed to speak as it hit the ground. Sunpaw saw her sisters despair and slowly walked over to her. "I believe you, Skyleap. You smell of HeatClan. Our father may have betrayed us, but if he is happy in HeatClan, so be it. We shall be stronger without him. We shall be happier without him. Our clan is not like HeatClan. We respect the warrior code. That s what makes us ColdClan, the cats of the mountain!" Approval rang through the cats mouths, and their cheers echoed off the trees.

"This clan meeting is dismissed." Mudstar shouted above the crowd.

17. Skyleap

"You're not going on your own... I won't let you!"

Skyleap was face to face with Sunpaw in the medicine cat den, her piercing blue eyes glaring at Sunpaw's yellow ones.

"You don't have much choice, y'know! Mudstar made his decision two days ago, at the clan meeting." Sunpaw hissed back, her tail erect.

Rolling her eyes, Skyleap flicked her tail in annoyance. "I don't *care* what Mudstar says. There are mountain lions out there, as well as HeatClan now hating us because I killed their deputy! Its just not safe, okay?"

Bending forwards and licking Skyleap's ear, Sunpaw sighed. "I know you're just trying to look after me, but you've already broken the warrior code by meeting Marshfoot. I'll be alright, Skyleap, the moonstone isn't far away."

The two she-cats stood next to each other in silence for a few seconds, before Skyleap nodded. "Alright. Be safe, Sunpaw. StarClan light your path." She rested her tail on her back.

Sandfall came into the medicine cat den as Skyleap was just about to leave. She wasn't using her left foreleg. "Greetings, Skyleap, Sunpaw. I'm afraid I seem to have a thorn in my paw, most likely from the mornings hunt. Would you care to help me?"

"Of course, Sandfall, come here. Skyleap was just leaving anyway." The two she-cats looked at each other once more, and Skyleap made her way out of the den.

It was a gloriously beautiful day. The sun lit every corner of the camp and there were plenty of cats laid sunbathing. She spotted Rowanwhisker at the far end of the camp, sharing tongued with the young apprentice Rosepaw. Although she was going to go over and talk to him, there was suddenly a sharp kick in the side of her belly and she had to sit down out of shock. That had been the first time one of her kits had kicked since she found out she was pregnant. She still hadn't told any of her family, and was actually quite scared to do so.

All of a sudden, her old mentor Redflight emerged from the forest. He caught her eye and made his way over. "Skyleap, my old friend. Its been long since we last spoke. How are you?"

Ignoring the wriggling kits in her belly, Skyleap gave a huge smile to Redflight, for he had been the most brilliant mentor any cat could ask for. Mudstar was currently considering his new deputy, as the clan seemed to have accepted that Cloudmask wasn't coming

back, and Skyleap wouldn't be surprised if he picked Redflight.

"I am well, Redflight, though worried for my sister as there are many dangers on her journey to the moonstone."

Nodding in agreement, Redflight rested his tail on her back. "She'll be alright, StarClan will watch her... There's something else I wish to discuss with you." His fluffy ginger fur waved in the breeze.

"What is it, Redflight?" She asked, tilting her grey tabby head to one side.

"Perhaps I shouldn't say in the middle of the clan. Its quite a..sensitive topic. Shall we go to the stream?"

Skyleap nodded in agreement, and followed her old mentor towards the direction of the stream. They passed Lakeheart's patrol, who were returning from up the mountain. Redflight paused to ask Lakeheart if he had seen anything, but none of the cats on the patrol had.

They continued on, and soon met the stream. Skyleap dipped her head and lapped up the cool water, as Redflight patiently waited a fox-length away. He looked around for other cats, but none seemed to be about. Skyleap sat in front of him.

"I'm sorry to bring you out here, but this is important. I'm worried about my brother. Riverdew has seemed rather distant since Cloudmask left. They were best friends. That's not all. The other day I followed Riverdew out of camp and he met with a HeatClan warrior on the border... I think he's telling all our secrets to HeatClan, just like Cloudmask did." Redflight looked upset.

"Redflight.. I'm sorry, but I don't know what you want me to do about it. I have no power, I'm just a warrior.."

Redflight looked extremely surprised. "You don't know? Mudstar hasn't spoken to you?"

Confused, Skyleap shook her head. "What, no, he hasn't? Why? What's going on?"

"Perhaps this was not the right time to tell you then. We should forget this conversation ever happened."

Redflight got up and began to run back to camp. Skyleap called his name, but he didn't turn around. *What on earth was that all about?*

With the kits inside her growing with each passing day, and her heart ache for Marshfoot doing so too, she really didn't want any more drama from her clan.

18. Sunpaw

The night was dark and the wind was nippy. Sunpaw's head was half out the medicine cat den and she sniffed the air. The storm that had occurred a few days ago was long since gone, and although it was slightly cold, Sunpaw was glad she was travelling in the good weather.

Making her way out of camp, she was distracted by Mudstar sat on his leader's rock, looking at the stars. He heard her coming and turned to face her. "StarClan be with you, Sunpaw." He said simply. She nodded at him and continued out, finding the trail down the mountain easily. The moonstone was situated next to the StarCave where the gatherings were held, sometimes known as the MoonCave.

She travelled swiftly, for she had no time to lose. Her steps were quick and light, and her thoughts were filled with hope. Would StarClan accept her as the new medicine cat? She truly hoped so.

A thicket blocked her path, and she gave a small mew of annoyance. Glancing around, she noticed a low branch of a silver birch tree, and with a spring she was up on it in a second. Steadily she walked on, and she was about to jump over the other side when there was a crack behind her... The branch she was walking along wasn't strong enough to hold her!

Eyes filled with shock, instinct made her claws dig into the branch as she slowly tried to scramble back up the tree. As the branch fell, someone grabbed her by the scruff of her neck. Although attempting to look up, Sunpaw couldn't see her savior. With a strong pull, the cat had lifted her back onto another branch nearby. She knew if she had been a warrior, she would have been okay if she fell, but because she was a medicine cat, she guessed she really did need saving.

Standing before her was the one and only Spidertail. She let out the breath she had been keeping in, pushing her face into his chest fur.

"I can't believe you're here, I'm meant to make this journey alone!"

"You didn't really think I'd let you travel to the moonstone alone, what, with all those mountain lions out?" He licked her forehead.

Sunpaw looked to the moon. "We don't have long, we'd better be quick. Follow me, and by StarClan, keep up!"

Rolling his eyes, Spidertail fell silently in line behind her, keeping at her pace perfectly. Every step closer made her more nervous, but with Spidertail only a mouse-length away from her, she knew she had nothing to worry about.

Upon reaching the moonstone cavern, Sunpaw turned to Spidertail. "I must go in alone. I'll see you when I come out.. hopefully with a warrior name!"

The two cats said their farewells, and Sunpaw entered the cavern. Moonlight filled the cave with a beautiful ambience, and she felt relaxed. Talking to the warrior spirits would be much easier if she didn't freak out. The moonstone stood proud and mighty above her, lit up by the moon. *Here it goes.* She thought as she pressed her nose against the moonstone.

Instantly, she entered a dream-like state. The darkness shrouded her, and she found herself walking along a starry path. There was a cat just ahead of her, and she guessed she had to speak with it. When she reached the cat, she noticed the stars in her eyes.

"Larkwing!" She cried out lovingly, trying to push her nose to her mentor's as she noticed who she was.. Unfortunately, Larkwing's spirit dispersed into the mist and she reappeared a fox-length away.

"Sunpaw, I'm glad you're here. Come, there are some cats who wish to see you before you earn your medicine cat title. Follow me." Larkwing began to walk into a ball made of massive constellations. It reminded her of the dens they had back in ColdClan.

"Dawnstar, Sunpaw is here." Larkwing dipped her head as the beautiful golden tabby she-cat she remembered being leader when she was a kit made her way over, followed closely by Runningpelt,

Ashstone, Greysplash and Aspenpaw.

Seeing the cats brought tears to her eyes. She had so much respect for all these cats who had died so bravely. Ashstone and Greysplash had been idolised by the kits of the clan, and Aspenpaw had been a playmate of hers when she was only a few moons old. Runningpelt was courageous and wise, and Dawnstar was just.. Dawnstar.

"Greetings, young Sunpaw. We're all so proud of how far you've come. You will be a special medicine cat... you're different from all the rest. Larkwing taught you well, and now you are ready to receive our blessing. Remember, we will always walk by your side." Dawnstar spoke with power and beauty. Slowly, the StarClan cats began to disappear, all except for Larkwing.

Continuing on, the two she-cats reached a little pool. Through it, she could see the world she had left behind, and most importantly she could see her sister. Pausing to see why Sunpaw had stopped, Larkwing turned around. "You must look after your sister, Sunpaw, now that she's pregnant."

Sunpaw's mouth fell open like a guppy. "What!? Pregnant!?" Larkwing simply chuckled and they continued on. It reminded Sunpaw of old times when they used to collect herbs together; just Larkwing, her and their occasional conversation.

"Here we are. Sit on that stone." She flicked her glittering tail towards a flat stone floating mid-air. Sunpaw was somewhat worried that it would sink to the ground if she sat on it, but she trusted Larkwing and did as she was told.

"I, Larkwing, former medicine cat of ColdClan call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help she will serve her clan for many moons. Sunpaw, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between clan and clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

Sunpaw nodded eagerly. "I do, Larkwing, of course I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Sunpaw, from this moment you will be known as Sunstorm, for we fought my final battle in the midst of a storm. StarClan honors your courage, and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of ColdClan."

That was it. She had done it. She was now the the ginger tabby she-cat Sunstorm, the medicine cat of ColdClan.

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Her and Spidertail arrived back into camp as the sun was rising. All the cats were asleep except for Skyleap, who lay awake guarding the camp entrance. As Sunstorm and Spidertail crept up to her, she groggily yawned, not even realising they were there. Sunstorm pounced on her tail and she let out a yelp of surprise. When she saw her sister, her eyes gleamed with happiness.

"So!? Did StarClan accept my sister as the new medicine cat of ColdClan!?" She questioned, licking Sunstorm's body.

Sunstorm tried to look serious, but Skyleap wasn't buying it and shoved her. "Alright, alright! I'm no longer Sunpaw.. I'm Sunstorm!"

Skyleap nearly screamed with delight. Berrystep had been woken up by the commotion, and ran out of the warrior's den to join her daughters. The three she-cats celebrated by sharing tongues with one another, until Mudstar awoke. Sunstorm told him the news, and with a smile, he climbed onto the leader's rock.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the high rock for a clan meeting!" Mudstar's voice was proud and kind of unnerving to Sunstorm. She hoped the clan would be happy that she was the medicine cat now!

"ColdClan cats, we all know of Cloudmask's betrayal, so it has come to the time where I must appoint a new deputy. But firstly, Sunpaw travelled to the moonstone last night and gained her full name. She is now Sunstorm, medicine cat of ColdClan! We all know she will live up to her predecessor, and carry on a legacy of amazing medicine cats."

Throughout the clan, there was cheers. Sunstorm saw her mother and sister at the front of the crowd, shouting madly above the rest. To their left was Spidertail, and his brothers Rowanwhisker and Tallnose a fox-length behind him, all happily chorusing her name. Right at the back of the clan, there seemed to be a ripple of anger. Riverdew was whispering in Clearwhisker's ear. The she-cat looked doubtfully at her mate, but he appeared to soothe her worries by entwining her tail with his. Sunstorm wondered what the older warrior was thinking; the tom had been good friends with her father, and she pondered on the thought that perhaps he was talking to his mate about him.

Mudstar flicked his tail, asking for silence once more. Sunstorm steadily moved over to her family and friends, who greeted her like she'd been lost for years.

"Now onto the fact that we need a new deputy. I apologise for not choosing a new deputy by moonhigh... I needed time to think. Cloudmask served us well, but he made his choice to join HeatClan. I needed someone with his courage and his skill.

I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of ColdClan is Redflight."

The fluffy, big ginger tom looked up in surprise, as if he had expected someone else to be deputy. He actually looked quite angry, and stalked up the rocks at his own pace. The clan cats were cheering as Redflight was a popular cat, but Skyleap was frowning and listening extremely closely to the leader and the new deputy's conversation.

"I *though*t you were going to appoint Skyleap!?" Redflight hissed as he touched noses with Mudstar.

Angrily, the brown leader flicked his ears in annoyance. "I was going to, but Mosspelt thinks she's pregnant. We need to give her time to tell the clan, but being deputy will not help that."

Sort of accepting his leader's words, Redflight turned down the rocks once more and sat at the base. Mudstar was about to end the

meeting when a voice called up from the back of the camp.

"Mudstar, I'd like to announce something to the clan!" Riverdew pushed through the warriors, making his way to the front.

Mudstar frowned, but let him continue anyway.

"Myself and Clearwhisker cannot remain in a camp with traitors like Skyleap and Sunstorm." He was blunt, and met the she-cats right in the eye. There were gasps throughout the camp, and Sunstorm's mouth hung open like a guppy.

Berrystep's eyes flared with anger. "How dare you! My daughters are more loyal to the clan than any other warrior here!"

Clearwhisker snorted with laughter. "If that is true, ask your daughter why she is pregnant with a HeatClan cat!"

Shocked, Berrystep fell silent. She turned to Skyleap and looked her directly in the eye. "Skyleap? Is this true?"

The pretty grey she-cat couldn't meet her mother's eyes.

"By StarClan, what have you done?" She whispered in disappointment.

Riverdew hushed everyone again. "We are leaving to join HeatClan, the purest clan ever to have lived! Cloudmask has already accepted us. We leave at moonhigh. Would any other cat like to join the pure race of cats?" His eyes were proud as he seemed to half expect the whole clan to follow him.

Sunstorm looked around at her clan, wondering what decision they would make. Her eyes met Spidertail and he held her gaze; she knew him and his brothers wouldn't be leaving any time soon.

The first warrior to speak was Webfall, the usually grumpy tom. "It is not Skyleap or Sunstorm who are disloyal to their clan, it is you. Fine, you can leave ColdClan, but nobody here is going to follow you. We *are* the cats of ColdClan. We have different qualities to our HeatClan cousin's, and that's what makes us stronger; we support our families and friends, even when there is no hope. If you can't

accept that, maybe you should join HeatClan."

Cats around the clan shouted in agreement. Skyleap let out a breath she had been keeping in, and Sunstorm's eyes were alight.

Mudstar seemed extremely proud, and puffed out his chest like a rooster. "Goodbye, Riverdew and Clearwhisker. May StarClan be always at your side."

Allegiances and Relations [four]

MAJOR EVENTS

Both Clans

>> It's been a moon in the book since the last 'Allegiances and Relations' chapter was posted.

ColdClan

>> News: ColdClan were attacked by a mountain lion once more, and Larkwing died. Sunpaw is now Sunstorm and is the new medicine cat. Skyleap was captured by HeatClan but escaped. Cloudmask is now living in HeatClan, and his apprentice Echopaw is now being mentored by Mudstar. Redflight is now the deputy of ColdClan. Riverdew and Clearwhisker have left to join HeatClan. Skyleap has joined the queens den.

>> New elders in ColdClan: none.

>> New warriors in ColdClan: Tallnose and Spidertail.

>> New apprentices in ColdClan: Lilypaw has decided to become a medicine cat.

>> New kits in ColdClan: none.

HeatClan

>> News: Dovefeather was killed by Skyleap. Cloudmask is now the deputy of HeatClan. Marshfoot has gone to live the life of a kittypet. Twigjaw has come out of the elders den to be the medicine cat till Ivypaw is ready. Riverdew and Clearwhisker have decided to join HeatClan.

>> New elders in HeatClan: none.

> > New warriors in HeatClan: Wolfclaw, Ashflower, Riverdew and Clearwhisker.

> > New apprentices in HeatClan: Breezepaw and Sagepaw.

> > New kits in HeatClan: none.

COLDCLAN

Leader - Mudstar; *male, 53 moons, mate is Mosspelt, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit. (5 lives.)*

Deputy - Redflight; *male, 54 moons, brother of Riverdew*.

Medicine Cat - Sunstorm; *female, 13 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Skyleap.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Lilypaw; *female, 8 moons, sister is Rosepaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Sunstorm.*

Warriors -

> > Berrystep; *female, 44 moons, mate was Cloudmask, daughters are Sunstorm and Skyleap, sisters are Mosspelt and Larkwing, mentor to Rosepaw.*

> > Sandfall; *female, 27 moons, mate of Sootleg, sons are Rowanwhisker, Spidertail and Tallnose.*

> > Sootleg; *male, 33 moons, mate of Sandfall, sons are Rowanwhisker, Spidertail and Tallnose.*

> > Owlfoot; *male, 18 moons, brother of Mousecloud.*

> > Webfall; *male, 24 moons, mate of Mousecloud, adoptive father to Mistheart, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit.*

> > Lakeheart*; male, 43 moons, mate of Silvernose, brother of Creekwillow, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

>> Creekwillow*; female, 43 moons, sister of Lakeheart.*

>> Silvernose; *female, 33 moons, mate is Lakeheart, daughters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, son is Echopaw.*

>> Mistheart; *female, 14 moons, unknown family, adoptive father is Webfall.*

>> Magpiefur; *female, 14 moons, daughter of Riverdew and Clearwhisker who now belong to HeatClan.*

>> Rowanwhisker; *male, 11 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spidertail and Tallnose.*

>> Stagfoot; *male, 45 moons, mate is Fawngaze.*

>> Spidertail; *male, 11 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Rowanwhisker and Tallnose.*

>> Tallnose; *male, 11 moons, son of Sandfall and Sootleg, brothers are Spidertail and Rowanwhisker.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Mousecloud; *female, 18 moons, sons are Robinkit and Heronkit, mate of Webfall, sister of Owlfoot.*

>> Mosspelt; *female, 44 moons, mate is Mudstar, daughter is Fishkit, son is Stonekit, sister is Berrystep.*

>> Honeystrike; *female, 28 moons, mate is Gorseface, expecting three kits.*

>> Fawngaze; *female, 24 moons, expecting two kits, mate is Stagfoot.*

>> Skyleap; *female, 13 moons, daughter of Cloudmask and Berrystep, sister is Sunstorm, expecting three kits.*

Kits -

>> Fishkit; *female, 4 moons, brother is Stonekit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

> > Stonekit; *male, 4 moons, sister is Fishkit, parents are Mosspelt and Mudstar.*

> > Robinkit; *male, 3 moons, brother is Heronkit, parents are Mousecloud and Webfall.*

> > Heronkit; *male, 3 moons, brother is Robinkit, parents are Mousecloud and Webfall.*

Apprentices -

> > Echopaw; *male, 8 moons, sisters are Rosepaw and Lilypaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Redflight.*

> > Rosepaw; *female, 8 moons, sister is Lilypaw, brother is Echopaw, parents are Silvernose and Lakeheart, mentor is Berrystep.*

Elders -

> > Shadeshell; *male, 83 moons, brother of Smokepelt.*

> > Smokepelt; *male, 83 moons, brother of Shadeshell.*

> > Gorseface; *male, 33 moons, mate is Honeystrike, early retirement because of damaged hind legs.*

HEATCLAN

Leader - Foxstar; *male, 48 moons, mentor of Sagepaw. (6 lives.)*

Deputy - Cloudmask; *male, 48 moons, mate was Berrystep, mate is Jaypelt, son is Pinepaw, daughters are Sunstorm and Skyleap, mentor to Pinepaw.*

Medicine Cat - Twigjaw; *female, 83 moons, mother of Grassflower, ex-elder serving as medicine cat till Ivypaw is old enough to take over.*

Medicine Cat Apprentice - Ivypaw; *female, 9 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Reedpaw.*

Warriors -

>> Goldheart; *male, 53 moons, mate of Beechpelt, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash, mentor of Breezepaw.*

>> Beechpelt; *female, 42 moons, mate of Goldheart, sons are Marshfoot and Sootsplash.*

>> Rabbitnose; *female, 41 moons, mate of Mintstep, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw.*

>> Mintstep; *male, 54 moons, mate of Rabbitnose, son is Applepaw, daughter is Cherrypaw.*

>> Coldfrost; *male, 44 moons, mate of Dovefeather (deceased), daughter is Beeface, mentor to Applepaw.*

>> Bearleap; *male, 54 moons, brother of Briartail.*

>> Briartail; *female, 54 moons, sister of Bearleap.*

>> Nettlepelt; *male, 30 moons, mate of Swallowfeather, daughters are Reedpaw and Ivypaw.*

>> Vinepuddle; *male, 46 moons, mentor to Reedpaw.*

>> Dustfire; *male, 34 moons, mate of Mapleheart, daughter is Breezepaw, son is Sagepaw, mentor to Cherrypaw.*

>> Grassflower*; female, 44 moons, daughter is Ashflower, son is Wolfclaw.*

>> Sootsplash; *male, 15 moons, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt, brother is Marshfoot.*

>> Swallowfeather; *female, 27 moons, mate of Nettlepelt, daughters are Reedpaw and Ivypaw.*

>> Beeface; *female, 14 moons, father is Coldfrost, mother was Dovefeather (deceased.)*

>> Riverdew; *male, 55 moons, mate of Clearwhisker, daughter is Magpiefur, brother of Redflight, ex-ColdClan member.*

>> Clearwhisker; *female, 52 moons, mate of Riverdew, daughter is Magpiefur, ex-ColdClan member.*

>> Wolfclaw; *male, 13 moons, mother is Grassflower, sister is Ashflower.*

>> Ashflower; *female, 13 moons, mother is Grassflower, brother is Wolfclaw.*

>> *Mapleheart; female, 28 moons, mate of Dustfire, daughter is Breezepaw, son is Sagepaw.*

>> *Jaypelt; female, 40 moons, mate of Cloudmask, son is Pinepaw.*

Queens expecting/nursing kits -

>> Briartail; *female, 53 moons, sister of Bearleap, kits are Stripekit, Daisykit and Tigerkit.*

Kits -

>> Stripekit; *female, 1 moon, mother is Briartail, brother is Tigerkit, sister is Daisykit.*

>> *Daisykit; female, 1 moon, mother is Briartail, brother is Tigerkit, sister is Stripekit.*

>> *Tigerkit; male, 1 moon, mother is Briartail, sisters are Daisykit and Stripekit.*

Apprentices

>> Reedpaw; *female, 9 moons, parents are Swallowfeather and Nettlepelt, sister is Ivypaw, mentor is Vinepuddle.*

>> Cherrypaw; *female, 9 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, brother is Applepaw, mentor is Dustfire.*

>> Applepaw*; male, 9 moons, parents are Mintstep and Rabbitnose, sister is Cherrypaw, mentor is Coldfrost.*

>> Pinepaw; *male, 8 moons, parents are Cloudmask and Jaypelt,*

mentor is Cloudmask.

>> Breezepaw; *female, 7 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, brother is Sagepaw, mentor is Goldheart.*

>> Sagepaw; *male, 7 moons, parents are Dustfire and Mapleheart, sister is Breezepaw, mentor is Foxstar.*

Elders -

none

ROGUES/LONERS/KITTYPETS

>> Rustfire; *male, 56 moons, ColdClan cat turned kittypet.*

>> Marshfoot; *male, 15 moons, brother is Sootsplash, parents are Goldheart and Beechpelt, mate is Skyleap, HeatClan medicine cat turned kittypet.*

(c) of the names to me, idea comes from Erin Hunter's work.

author's note

Hey, ColdClan readers! This little chapter is just for all you. You guys have made me so happy, and want to continue writing this book forever!

A big shoutout to @ashylady and Sparrowheart838, as they have been with me since the start of writing this book. Thanks for sharing the journey so far with me, guys, and here's to more to come!

Finally, I'd like to say a big thank you to those anonymous readers. I know you never comment and you only occasionally vote, but just reading this book makes me feel happy.

I'm excited for the future. I can't wait to see where Skyleap's and Sunstorm's lives go next!

19. Skyleap

Shifting uneasily in her sleep, Skyleap's body writhed in the soft moss. Previously, she had never thought that she would be affected by her father's departure, but now she couldn't get him out of her head. *Why didn't he love me, Sunstorm and Berrystep the way he loves Jaypelt and Pinepaw?* She asked herself whilst sleep overcame her.

The clan hadn't exactly be kind to her once they found out that her kits would be half HeatClan, but over the past half moon she'd attempted to build her relationships with her clanmates back up again. Slowly by surely, the clan were beginning to trust her again, though she wasn't sure how they'd treat her kits once they were born. Thankfully, her mother had forgiven her. That's all she wanted anyway.

Skyleap had never had a dream from StarClan before, and she hardly expected to, for she was simply a queen in ColdClan creating the next generation of cats. However today they seemed to have chosen her, and when moonhigh came around, she found herself hovering about the mountain looking down at the camp. Silverpelt glittered above her head elegantly, and she felt relaxed. The old warrior Ashstone's starry pelt appeared in front of her and she greeted him by touching noses with him, a familiar scent filling her nostrils.

"Ashstone, I haven't seen you in what seems like forever. I've missed you." Skyleap glanced down to check she wasn't falling and was still hovering in the air.

"I always walk by your side, Skyleap. But I haven't brought you here to have a casual talk. I must show you something. Follow me." Ashstone walked towards the camp as if there was an invisible hill in the sky. Skyleap followed obediently.

She soon found herself in the queens den, and she saw her body sleeping on the floor. The other four queens, Mousecloud, Mosspelt, Honeystrike and Fawngaze laid peacefully together. Robinkit and

Heronkit slept side by side, and the prophecy kits Fishkit and Stonekit were buried either side of their mother's fur.

Ashstone gestured to Fishkit. "These four kits are *extremely* important to ColdClan."

With a frown, Skyleap wandered over to where Ashstone stood. "Oh? Why is that?" She questioned him.

"Soon they shall be apprentices, and they will be the ones to finally rid ColdClan of the savage mountain lions that terrorise us."

Skyleap shrugged. "I knew that Fishkit and Stonekit were part of a prophecy, but Robinkit and Heronkit? Where do they come in?"

"The four must stay together to have any chance of defeating the mountain lions. If they try and do it on their own, they will never succeed. They must work together!" Ashstone stressed the last sentence.

There was worry in Skyleap's face as she looked down on the kits. They were so young, and yet had so much pinned to them. She wasn't sure how she was going to keep the cats together, but if it was StarClan's will, then so be it. With a silent nod, Skyleap pressed her nose to Ashstone's. "I won't let you down."

"We know, Skyleap." The tom smiled. "We know you won't."

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Daybreak came upon Skyleap in a sudden rush. A blackbird twittered over the entrance of the queen's den, and Skyleap longed to leap upon it and kill it. It was not to be, however, as with each passing day her belly swelled. She was as big as a badger!

Ambling aimlessly out of the den, Skyleap headed for the fresh-kill pile. Her belly seemed suddenly desperate for a fat, juicy mouse. She couldn't see one on the pile and she let out a sigh in exasperation. As she was about to turn away, she saw Rowanwhisker heading over to the pile, accompanied by Rosepaw. They both carried dead prey in their mouths, and Skyleap looked up in relief.

"Thank goodness, your brought a mouse!" She exclaimed, wobbling over to meet Rowanwhisker half way. Although she hadn't spoken to him since he had found out she was pregnant with a HeatClan cat, she still longed to be his friend again.

Rowanwhisker dropped the mouse at her feet in a hostile manner. "There you go." He said simply, turning around and heading over towards Rosepaw.

"Wait, aren't you going to share it with me!?" She called after him, longing for him to come back so they could talk. Rowanwhisker pretended like he hadn't heard her. *He's getting close to little Rosepaw.*. She thought. *I wonder if he loves her the way he used to love me?* She did feel bad about letting Rowanwhisker down, but Marshfoot had just stolen her heart.

Thoughtfully laying in the sun, she pondered what Marshfoot could be up to right now. He would have been right, they would never have accepted him back into HeatClan, nor would they have accepted him here.

She was stirred by the sudden realisation of Owlfoot standing over her. "Skyleap, you're sat right in my favourite sunbathing spot!" He laughed, giving her a gentle push.

"I'm sorry, Owlfoot, I didn't realise! Usually I'd be out hunting or on a patrol now, it feels mad being a queen just laying around doing nothing."

Owlfoot was a strange coloured cat; some may describe him as a mottle, fluffy Siamese looking tom. He was quite young but very smart and a great asset to ColdClan.

"I'm so glad I'll never have to have kits, I couldn't stand being away from my warrior duties!" He chuckled.

Skyleap nodded in agreement. "It isn't the best of fun, but I want what is best for them. I just hope the clan accepts them, even though they're half HeatClan."

"They'll be alright. I'll stick up for you and them, don't you worry!"

Owlfoot touched her shoulder affectionately, before Webfall began to speak to him about going hunting. Skyleap finished up her mouse quickly, and it was then she heard a cry from the queen's den. Lumbering over as fast as she could, she was surprised to see Fawngaze squealing in pain on her moss bed.

"Skyleap!" She mewed through gritted teeth. "Please, fetch Sunstorm!"

Skidding out of the den, Skyleap moved with a kind of wobble towards her sister, who was sat at the edge of her own den watching the clan peacefully. "Sunstorm, come quick, Fawngaze is having her kits!"

Instantly on her feet, Sunstorm waved to Lilypaw to hurry with some herbs. As Skyleap met her sister's gaze, she realised the ginger she-cat was thinking of her mentor. Their connection felt strong and Skyleap comforted Sunstorm without even saying anything.

Skyleap didn't want to particularly see the birth, as she wasn't looking forward to her own, so she paced around impatiently outside. In the den she could hear Mosspelt comforting her, for the she-cat had two kits of her own. Stagfoot pelted out from the undergrowth, straight towards the nursery. His face was full of concern, and when he heard Fawngaze's distressed yowls, he gave a mew of heartache. "I'm coming, my love!" Skyleap heard him say as he raced past her. If only Marshfoot would be there to do the same to her.

Lilypaw stepped out of the den with blood on her paws. She looked exhausted. The young cat had been medicine cat apprentice for less than a moon, however she seemed more than competent. Lilypaw was shy and kind hearted, but she lacked the confidence to be a great medicine cat like Sunstorm. Every cat in the clan hoped her confidence would grow over time.

"My first real life birth.." Lilypaw whispered, looking at the ground.

"It's done!? My kits are born?" Stagfoot questioned, only a mouse-length from Lilypaw's face.

"Why don't you go look?" She replied.

Stagfoot galloped in, followed by Skyleap in his shadow. There was a lot of blood and Fawngaze didn't look well, however the two kits were alive and seemed okay.

"Fawngaze lost a lot of blood. She needs a few days to get back on her feet. Plus, she hasn't produced any milk. The other queens are going to have to help feed her kits. These two little toms, however, are extremely healthy. Congratulations, both of you." Sunstorm bent her head, and beckoned to Lilypaw. She began to discuss which herbs Fawngaze would need.

Crouching next to the new parents, Skyleap looked at the two new kits in awe. They were handsome toms who looked just like their parents; Skyleap turned to Fawngaze to ask what they're called.

"This is Frogkit, he's wriggled a lot and I thought the name suited him. This is Crowkit, because he has dark fur and dark eyes." Fawngaze sounded tired but proud. Stagfoot leaned into her side, licking her gently.

"Well done, both of you. I'll ask Echopaw or Rosepaw to fetch you some fresh bedding. No doubt that curious little Echopaw will want to know everything about your kits!" Giving them them a final glance, she wandered out of the den. Her eyes fell upon Mudstar, who seemed to be about to call a meeting.

"ColdClan cats, gather under my high rock so I can tell you which cats will be going to the gathering!" Skyleap missed gatherings; the thrill of it always made her happy. There would be no gathering for her this moon, but she wanted to know who Mudstar would pick anyway.

"I have chosen Redflight, Berrystep, Stagfoot, Owlfoot, Webfall, Rosepaw, Lilypaw, Echopaw and Sunstorm."

What a tiny party... Skyleap thought. She wondered why he was only taking a few cats. Her question was answered only a few seconds later.

"Redflight's dawn patrol scented mountain lion near the moon cave. I only want the most able warriors with me right now, so if we get into trouble, we can get out of there as quickly as possible."

Makes sense. Skyleap nodded.

20. Sunstorm

Surrounded by the gathering cats, Sunstorm was patiently waiting to leave. Her mother was tracing her claw around the sand of the camp, and Stagfoot stood nearby fretting about going to his first gathering. The big tom had fitted into clan life well; he was obedient and calm. Rosepaw, Echopaw and Lilypaw all huddled together, attempting to keep warm. She was proud of her apprentice's progress, as the young she-cat was learning well. Her siblings, Rosepaw and Echopaw, were developing under their mentor's training, and Sunstorm could see they would be a great asset to the clan.

Only a few moments later, Mudstar's lanky body appeared from his den. Fishkit and Stonekit stood just in front of their mother, Mosspelt, who watched her mate leave the leader's den. Soon the prophecy kits would be apprentices, and finally they would be able to rid ColdClan of the mountain lions they lived constantly in fear of.

Following her leader out of camp under the thick undergrowth, Sunstorm hurried Lilypaw along. The little she-cat was struggling to keep up, and had to run to make the distance when she lagged behind. Their was a tense feeling throughout the cats, and Sunstorm guessed it was because they wondered if they'd have an encounter with the mountain lions. That brought her thoughts back to Larkwing, and she realised that this was the first gathering she would have been to without the mentor she held so dear. Now, she had taken Larkwing's place, and had her own apprentice to look out for.

Owlfoot and Webfall walked side by side, whispering nervously to each other. Rosepaw and Echopaw didn't seem to be feeling the effects of the mountain lion's threat.

Up ahead, the StarCave's beauty became more apparent. Sunstorm sniffed the air; Redflight had been right, there was a musky smell of mountain lion. However the stench of HeatClan overpowered it. As

they entered the StarCave, Sunstorm's fur bristled. Her father sat proudly at the base of the rock. It was chilly in the cave, and she shook partly because she was cold, but mostly out of anger for her father.

Striding over to where the medicine cats sat, she tried not to look at her father. Berrystep herself seemed to have put a big distance between them, and she was staring intently at Mudstar, though occasionally her eyes flickered to Cloudmask.

Foxstar's red pelt stood out as opposed to Mudstar's chocolate brown. The two leaders murmured to each other for a moment, exchanging greetings. Sunstorm noticed Ivypaw, the HeatClan medicine cat apprentice, standing alongside an old cat she didn't recognise. Making her way over, she smiled at Ivypaw. Sunstorm knew that the pretty she-cat had flourished under Marshfoot's teachings, and wondered how she was coping.

"Greetings, Ivypaw, it's been a while since I last saw you. How are things in HeatClan?"

"Hi, Sunstorm! Things in HeatClan are-" Ivypaw was interrupted by the older she-cat.

"Things are great, thank you." She muttered.

Sunstorm decided not to pry into HeatClan's life any further, but she was eager to know who this cat was. "Who are you, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Twigjaw." She said bluntly, her brown fur was stained with mud. She was an ugly creature; her eyes were popping out of their sockets and her jaw was crooked.

Ivypaw rolled her eyes, and explained to Sunstorm why Twigjaw stood with the medicine cats. She told her that HeatClan needed a medicine cat to fill in until Ivypaw was ready to take on the role, and Twigjaw had studied medicine as an apprentice, before she became a warrior. The old cat gave her a hostile glare. Lilypaw wandered over and began to speak with Ivypaw, and Sunstorm felt very alone once again.

A short while later, Mudstar began to speak. "I shall speak first." Foxstar nodded his head in approval. The moon shone down on the cats, and Sunstorm could almost feel the StarClan cats watching them.

"Obviously Cloudmask is now the deputy of HeatClan. Our new deputy is Redflight. We know he will be a brilliant deputy." There was a bit of tension in the clans as Mudstar paused. Some cats shouted Redflight's name. The big tom looked nervous.

Mudstar continued. "The mountain lions are still a threat, and have taken another life. We lost one of the greatest medicine cats of all time. Larkwing will be missed throughout both the clans, I'm sure. Her knowledge has been passed down to our new medicine cat, Sunstorm, and she has taken Lilypaw on as her own apprentice." Cloudmask met Sunstorm's gaze, and seemed to mouth a 'congratulations'. She ignored him and turned away.

"We have two new kits in ColdClan. Their names are Frogkit and Crowkit, and they are the sons of Stagfoot and Fawngaze."

There were whispers coming from behind her. She recognised one of the voices as the HeatClan 'gossip', Rabbitnose. "I heard they were rogues or something." She whispered to a younger she-cat to her left.

"Mmh, I heard that too. Those poor kits will be shunned their entire life, and it isn't even their fault! Did you hear about that Skyleap cat? She is apparently pregnant with Marshfoot, would you believe it!"

Sunstorm hissed under her breath, her ears twitching anxiously. *How dare they talk about Skyleap like she is so mangy crowfood!? She's one of the best, most loyal warriors I've ever known!*

"That is all I have to say." Mudstar mewed.

Foxstar puffed his chest out. "My turn!" He chuckled.

"Well, HeatClan have a new deputy as you have mentioned. We know Cloudmask will be a loyal member of HeatClan!"

Webfall, who was a fox-length away from Sunstorm, shouted out. "Yeah right!" It made Sunstorm smirk, but Mudstar glared at Webfall.

The ginger tom continued. "We have two new warriors, Riverdew and Clearwhisker. We have three new kits, too, named Daisykit, Stripekit and Tigerkit. Also, Twigjaw has come out of the elders den to serve as our medicine cat. Marshfoot is no longer welcome in HeatClan, and one can only guess where he has gone."

He's a kittypet because no clan will take in a traitor. Sunstorm snorted.

"Well, if that's everything?" Mudstar looked at Foxstar.

"Actually, there is one thing I'd like to discuss. Cloudmask has brought it to my attention. As the dogs grow increasingly closer to my clan, we have to keep moving our camp towards the mountain. Cloudmask mentioned a cave on the side of the mountain?"

Redflight piped up. "Yes, that's called the BearCave. Our ColdClan ancestors killed a bear who used to live there and terrorise our clan... it's always belonged to ColdClan."

"Well we think differently." Foxstar wrapped his tail round his body as he sat down. "Apparently, there were a few HeatClan warriors who assisted ColdClan with the death of the bear. So that means, in fact, that the BearCave partly belongs to HeatClan."

Angrily, Mudstar got to his feet in a challenging manner. Part of his anger was directed at Cloudmask. "How dare you! That bear was on ColdClan territory, and so it had nothing to do with HeatClan! Our ancestors would never have asked your clan for help with something we could easily do ourselves."

Foxstar's lips curled back and he bared his teeth. "Are you denying that HeatClan had no influence in killing the bear?"

Hissing, Mudstar took a step forward. "I am."

Cocking his head, Foxstar almost smiled. "Twigjaw? Tell Mudstar and the rest of the ColdClan non-believers what happened to you."

The brown she-cat dipped her head in respect. Her voice was harsh and made Sunstorm's ears ring. "I was just an apprentice at the time. The leader of ColdClan was Goosestar, and the leader of HeatClan was Shrewstar. When Goosestar lost many of her warriors to the bear, she called upon Shrewstar to help her. Shrewstar sent out all his warriors and apprentices, and that is how I gained this scar." She pointed with an outstretched claw to a long, jagged claw mark on the top of her head.

Mudstar's mouth fell upon. There was no denying the scar looked horrifically like what something a bear would do. Redflight didn't seem so fooled.

"Your sob story tugged at all of our hearts, Twigjaw, but that cannot be true. Two of our own elders fought in that very same battle, and they said that Goosestar had actually sent Shrewstar away as she didn't want any more warriors dying. I've heard his story many a time."

"Are you calling me a liar!?" The she-cat shrieked, her eyes almost popping out her skull.

"Perhaps. But HeatClan should know, we're not going down without a fight!" Redflight spat.

HeatClan warriors spontaneously leapt to their feet, baring their teeth. The rather depleted band of ColdClan warriors copied them, huddling together. Mudstar and Foxstar were slashing at each other.

"Stop!" Lilypaw shouted out. "Can't you see StarClan are angry? It's against the warrior code to fight at gatherings!" Motioning to the clouds covering the moon, Sunstorm felt a sudden burst of pride for her apprentice.

"Lilypaw's right!" Sunstorm agreed. "Do you wish to anger StarClan any more?"

Letting go of Foxstar's scruff, Mudstar jumped off the stalagmite he sat on. "We're leaving." He muttered to Sunstorm and Redflight, who exchanged an awkward glance, before following their leader. As Sunstorm looked back, she noticed her father watching her

eagerly. He flicked his tail at her, as if he was saying goodbye. Sunstorm picked up her pace and walked side by side with Lilypaw.

"Those HeatClan cats can't be serious. BearCave has been ours since *forever*." Lilypaw muttered. "Why do they suddenly want it now?"

Sunstorm had no time to answer.

There was a scary yowl as the ColdClan cats got into the trees. They all span around to see HeatClan being circled by two bulky male mountain lions. "Oh, StarClan!" Sunstorm whispered under her breath.

Mudstar's own blue eyes were wide with shock. "What do we do, Mudstar? We can't stand idly by and watch them be shredded!"

Taking a step forward, Stagfoot bent his head to Mudstar. "If you'll allow me, Mudstar, I think I know a way we can help the HeatClan cats without getting involved in the thick of the battle."

Still frozen from shock, Sunstorm had to give Mudstar a gentle nudge before he absorbed what Stagfoot had said in. "Yes," he whispered. "Stagfoot is in charge now. Follow his lead."

With a curt nod, the massive tom made his way around the edge of the StarCave. Soon, Sunstorm found herself on what she guessed was on top of the StarCave. There were less trees and more rocks here, some boulders even bigger than the mountain lions themselves.

"Push with a your might on this boulder when I say, okay?" Stagfoot whispered, directing the cats. The ten of them waited eagerly behind one of the boulders. Stagfoot kept peeking out, watching the mountain lion's every move.

"Now!" He shouted, and instantly the cats moved into action. The boulder was rolled over the side (almost closely followed by Rosepaw, who Webfall quickly grabbed). Smashing right into the first mountain lion, Sunstorm thought she heard it's skull crack. It sent a shudder down her spine. HeatClan cats looked surprised, glancing at the skies as though they expected a StarClan cat to

suddenly appear.

Rabbitnose, the same she-cat who had criticised Skyleap earlier, called out. "Look, ColdClan are up there! They're helping us!"

As Sunstorm was about to shout back down, Rabbitnose was knocked off her feet by the mountain lion. She squealed in fear. "We need to be careful of that warrior." Stagfoot said, as if he read Sunstorm's thoughts. The mountain lion flung Rabbitnose to one side, and made a beeline for a tiny apprentice. Cloudmask jumped in between them. *My father, protecting another cat? I find that hard to believe.* Sunstorm thought to herself.

"Now!" Stagfoot repeated, and the next boulder came crashing down.

"Fox dung!" Mudstar mewed, peering over the edge. "That one missed!"

"We've only got one more shot, okay?" Stagfoot's voice was calm, without any hint of panic. "We can do this. All push together when I say 'now'. Ready?"

Every ColdClan cat nodded, and pressed back against the boulder, awaiting Stagfoot's command. Sunstorm was between Berrystep and Lilypaw, and she gave a half hearted smile through gritted teeth.

"Now!" Stagfoot exclaimed, and this time the rock met it's target. The mountain lion buckled under the weight, and let out a howl of pain.

The HeatClan cats cheered, but Foxstar was beckoning them away. *They didn't even stay to say thank you.* Sunstorm thought angrily as she watched the opposing clan run back towards their camp.

"Great job, everyone. We just proved that ColdClan are brave, courageous and smart. Stagfoot, you did great."

"Thank you," Stagfoot looked tired. "Lets go home." All the other cats nodded in agreement.

Sunstorm paused a moment, looking up at Silverpelt. Larkwing's

voice filled her mind. *I'll always be by your side, Sunstorm.*

She knew now that Larkwing was in her soul. She had to stop feeling sorry for herself and help her clan, like they had helped HeatClan today. It was time to let Larkwing hunt among the stars.

21. Skyleap

Skyleap was resting in the queens den, her head filled with thoughts of her unborn kits. She wished with all her heart that Marshfoot could be with her, but it was not meant to be. Maybe one day she would attempt to persuade the fair minded Mudstar, but for now it had been Marshfoot's choice to leave, and she respected that.

With a sigh, she got to her feet. Sandfall was paid just outside the queen's den, enjoying the sunshine. Approaching the she-cat, Skyleap gave her a small nudge.

"Skyleap!" She exclaimed, twisting over so she laid on her back and she had a proper view of Skyleap, her gold and white fur slightly dusty from the camp floor. "You're getting bigger each time I see you." She smiled cheerily.

"Tell me about it!" Skyleap huffed, plopping herself down next to the warrior. "How are things on patrols and hunts? Are we stocking up on food for leaf-bare? Has there been any mountain lion sightings?"

"Calm down, Skyleap, the clan doesn't stop just because you're not a warrior at the minute!" Sandfall snorted. "Everything is fine with patrols and hunts. There has been no sign of HeatClan cats near the BearCave yet, and even the mountain lions are avoiding us. Mudstar really wants Stagfoot to take one of the prophecy kits on as an apprentice!"

Skyleap nodded cheerily. "That'd be amazing, it'd give Stagfoot a chance to prove his loyalty to the cats who don't believe he should be here."

Twitching her tail in agreement, Sandfall sat upright. "Did you hear that?" She asked, her fur prickling.

Glancing around, Skyleap saw nothing, but her refined hearing had heard whatever Sandfall had. With a curt nod, she got to her feet.

There was a sudden panic in the undergrowth, and Skyleap saw Lakeheart fly out from under the bushes. He gave a long yowl. "We're under attack!" He almost screamed as cats came out of the dens and awoke from their slumber.

Mudstar was over by his side in a second, staying as cool as he always was. "Lakeheart, calm down, what is it?" He questioned.

Sandfall and Skyleap were up on their feet, eyes wide with fear and awaiting Lakeheart's reply. Taking in a deep breath, Lakeheart started again. "I was on a patrol near the BearCave with Creekwillow, Sootleg and Webfall. Suddenly, about six HeatClan cats jumped on us! We tried to hold them off but it was no use... Creekwillow, Sootleg and Webfall all had to flee. I'm not sure where they went. I came straight here, but I don't think they just want the BearCave... I think they want to take over the whole of our clan!"

After plenty of gasps from the crowd, Mudstar turned to Redflight who was expectantly awaiting his orders. "Gather a patrol immediately. Lakeheart, fetch Sunstorm, make sure she is ready for multiple battle injuries. Sandfall and Owlfoot, I want you to stay and help protect the queens, elders and kits. The apprentices shall stay with you. If our three missing warriors return, send two of them to fight, if they are able, and keep one to assist you."

The camp suddenly was a flurry of cats moving, getting themselves ready for battle. Mosspelt appeared from the queen's den, her kits following behind inquisitively. "What's going on?" She asked.

"We're under attack, get back inside." Skyleap wanted to help so badly, but then she risked her kits' lives.

"Elders, queens and kits!" She commanded. "All of you in the queen's den. It's the biggest and best protected." If she couldn't help on the battlefield, she could surely help back home.

As the last elder went inside, and Sandfall and Owlfoot had taken their positions, Skyleap hesitantly followed the others. She glanced back before she did so, to see Rowanwhisker stood looking nervous. *This will be his first big battle.* She thought. *May StarClan be with him.*

The cats who were going to fight the HeatClan cats hadn't even left the camp by the time the enemies were upon them. Together, the formed a circle around the ColdClan warriors. Skyleap watched in horror from the depths of the den as she saw her clanmates be circled like prey.

Among the HeatClan cats was Sootsplash, Marshfoot's brother. *How can he be here fighting my clan!?* She questioned. *I thought he liked me... and he'd never want to hurt his brother.*

When Mudstar gave the command to attack, Skyleap almost ran to her clanmates sides in defence. It was so hard just to sit back and watch her friends fight, when she wanted so dearly to assist them. Foxstar and Cloudmask were face to face with Mudstar, who stood alone slightly away from the crowd. Both cats were crouching low, and Skyleap wondered how Mudstar was going to defend himself.

"You traitor, Cloudmask!" The brown tom hissed, landing a blow on Foxstar and at the same time narrowly missing one from Cloudmask.

Screaming but with no noise coming out, Skyleap helplessly watched as Mudstar was struck by Cloudmask from the side; it looked as though it could be a fatal wound. Skyleap wasn't sure how many lives their brave leader had left. Berrystep was by his side in an instant, courageously fighting her old mate with all her might. Skyleap felt pride well up in her chest.

There was a squeal from behind her in the den. The heads of elders, kits and queens snapped around to see Honeystrike writhing with pain at the back of the den. *She had to have her kits right now, StarClan!?* She groaned, making her way over to the she-cat. "Stay calm, Honeystrike, I'll fetch Sunstorm!"

Smokepelt, one of the elders, caught her before she left. "Skyleap, do you really think that's a good idea? You'd be in the midst of the battle!"

Pulling away, Skyleap looked outside again. "I *hav*e to. Honeystrike could have all sorts of complications! We need Sunstorm to be here, and Sandfall and Owlfoot have gone to fight in the actual battle."

Turning back to Honeystrike, who was now accompanied by Gorseface who had made his way over with the help of Shadeshell, she swapped places with the young queen. Imagining if that was her, she knew she'd want someone to do the same for her. Without another word, she took a mighty bound out of the den and ran as fast as she could towards Sunstorm's den. *Your first adventure, my little kits. I hope it is one of many.*

Her path was suddenly blocked by a tom she knew as Dustfire. The golden colour was unmistakable; his teeth were bared and he obviously wasn't going to let her go easily.

"Let me *past*!" She mewed angrily.

Shaking his head, the tom gave a laugh. "Not that simple, little one. This is a battle, don't you know? My side versus yours. We're here because we want ColdClan's territory, and *you*, little one, are going to be my first kill!"

Attempting to strike her, Dustfire leapt forward. Skyleap instinctively ducked, but forgot that she had a large belly to account for, and the tom clipped her ear. Hissing in pain, she spun around, ready to face him again.

Before she even had a chance to leap at her, something brown bolted past her and leapt on Dustfire. She scrambled backwards, not really sure who it was. "Marshfoot!?" She exclaimed, recognising his scent.

"Don't just stand there, mousebrained, *run*!" Marshfoot's face bobbed up and down as he tried to see Skyleap and make sure she escaped.

There was no time to lose; making a bee-line for the medicine cat den, Skyleap skittered in, narrowly avoiding the brave Echopaw who lay injured on the ground.

Wheezing heavily, Skyleap managed to get out some parts of a sentence. "Sunstorm... Honeystrike... kits!"

22. Sunstorm

This chapter contains a scene that may be upsetting to some readers. Please bear this in mind whilst reading. It is marked like this: * *

As Skyleap heaved for breath, her massive belly shaking from side to side, Sunstorm collected together her herbs. She grabbed poppy seeds first, before wrapping them in leaves to keep them safe. Picking up the packet between her teeth, she ran past Skyleap with a curt nod. "Stay here." She murmured through the leaves.

Running into the battle was a shock for Sunstorm's pale coloured eyes. There was a frenzy of fur flying and blood stained the dusty floor. It was difficult for her to hide from the HeatClan warriors, but she was quick on her feet; the way she moved was almost elegant.

When she reached the queens' den, she heard howls from inside. However, there were two different types of cats screeching: there was one in labour, and there was another in battle. *Mousedung*, she hissed, as she stepped inside. Bravely, Gorseface was fighting off a HeatClan warrior, trying to protect his mate. Shadeshell and Smokepelt were courageously battling a large apprentice.

Honeystrike's eyes were wild with fear. She was well into labour, and one of the kits was already born. Racing to her side, Sunstorm began taking the necessary herbs out of the pouch, however she was suddenly knocked sideways by the warrior who had been attacking Gorseface.

* * As she helplessly tried to get up, the HeatClan cat advanced towards Honeystrike's new born kit. It was wailing for it's mother's milk, and had no idea what fate was to come of it. Sunstorm, who was pinned down by the apprentice, bravely clawed at it's face. It was no use.

* * Gorseface laid injured on the floor and everyone else was battling more HeatClan cats who had swarmed the queens den. Screaming as the HeatClan warrior killed the kit with one swift motion, Sunstorm managed to break out from under the large apprentice's grasp and flew like a lightning bolt into the HeatClan warrior's side. The kit's tiny body laid silently on the floor.

Outside, something was happening, and it distracted some of the HeatClan warriors who left to find out what the commotion was. Sunstorm was thankfully left to tend to everyone in the queens den. Gorseface had a long wound above his left eye - any lower and he probably would have been blinded. Shadeshell and Smokepelt had only been left with a few scratches, and Fawngaze, Mosspelt and Mousecloud had bravely fought together, protecting their kits. Robinkit, Heronkit, Fishkit and Stonekit had all assisted their mothers. Little Fishkit seemed to have come off the worse, with what seemed to be half of her tail missing. She was moaning in pain and Sunstorm commanded Lilypaw to help her.

The battle outside was suddenly quiet, and Sunstorm wasn't sure why. Tentatively, Fawngaze looked out of the den entrance. "Oh, StarClan..." She whispered under her breath, just so much for the others in the den to hear.

"Its alright, Honeystrike, last push now and you'll have tw- one beautiful kit." Sunstorm's eyes flickered from the cat in labour to Fawngaze.

"My other kit..." Honeystrike whimpered, gasping for breath. Gorseface hobbled over to her side to comfort her.

Shadeshell and Smokepelt joined Fanwgaze at the den entrance, and their eyes filled with horror. Sunstorm was desperate to see what they were all looking at, and as soon as Honeystrike had the final push, she ran over. Mosspelt went to Honeystrike's side, comforting the queen.

When Sunstorm saw what was outside, tearful memories came flooding back. Larkwing's death still haunted her, and seeing a mountain lion once again almost killed her inside. Breathing heavily, she watched as her clanmates all cowered as a huge group

of cats, Stagfoot and Mudstar at the front trying to seem confident. The HeatClan cats had disappeared, obviously fearing for their lives. However she saw a cat she realised was Marshfoot standing next to the only remaining warrior of HeatClan, Sootsplash.

This was no ordinary mountain lion, it was huge. With one blow it could probably kill a cat, and that seemed to be why nobody was attacking. As the mountain lion circled, the warriors seemed increasingly scared and the lion could sense that.

Frozen in horror, Sunstorm watched as none of the cats dared to move. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Skyleap nervously watching from the den, alongside an injured Spidertail. *Thank StarClan they're both oka*y, she thought. Her head wildly snapped around as she tried to find her mother, letting out a breath of relief when she saw her next to Redflight.

There was a sudden flurry of brown fur. Out of nowhere, Rowanwhisker flew forward. The other ColdClan cats, tough hesitant at first, took this as a sign to attack and raced forwards. The mountain lion did not seem shocked and batted a few warriors easily out the way. Stagfoot managed to climb into the mountain lion's back, but he was smart and he rolled over, nearly squishing Stagfoot beneath him. This did, however, leave his flank open for attack, and Redflight and Berrystep took this advantage with open paws. Moving swiftly, they scratched it's belly, trying to inflict enough damage to cause a fatal wound.

It was only then that Sunstorm heard her name being called. She looked around, trying to find the source of the noise, but to no avail.

"*Sunstorm, my dearest. The prophecy kits! This is their chance! You must assist them. Fishkit and Stonekit will only be able to do what they're meant to do if you're by their side.*" Her soul felt warmed as she realised whose voice it was; her precious Larkwing had spoken to her.

Spinning around, she looked for the two kits. Fishkit's tail was still bleeding and Stonekit looked in no state to fight. *How are these kits going to save our clan?* She thought to herself, striding over to them

and crouching next to them. As she did so, an idea came to her mind. However she had to execute her plan perfectly for it to work.

"Fishkit, Stonekit, did Larkwing come to you too?" She asked, her yellow eyes looking into the young kits'.

Nodding, the little kits shook with fear

.

"Good, then you need to not be afraid. This is your chance to shine. Our warrior ancestors will look down on us today. Do you remember when you were very small, that there was a big commotion in clan because Rosekit got stuck in the stream?"

Once again, the kits nodded, but more eagerly this time.

"Well at this time of year, the stream is more dangerous. Torrents of water flood down the mountain, and us cats don't usually drink from it then. What you two must do is lead the mountain lion to the stream and make him fall in."

Glancing at each other, the kits looked worried. "But how, Sunstorm? You make it sound so simple!" Stonekit mewed.

Sunstorm paused, thinking. "We need something on the other side of the stream, something that the mountain lion wants more..."

Fishkit glanced at Stonekit, and there was a strange connection between the two. Sunstorm knew that the bond between siblings was one of the strongest, and she was proud of the little kits. "We have an idea!" Fishkit said sounding brave, pretending her tail was not bothering her.

Stonekit nodded in agreement. "Our fresh-kill pile! We get every cat of ColdClan to take a piece across the stream!"

There was a flaw in the problem. "None of us are good swimmers..." Sunstorm sighed.

"We don't have to be!" Fishkit mewed in reply. "There are low branches that we could hop across... The mountain lion is too big to

fit on them!"

Sunstorm hesitated, but the warm feeling inside urged her on. "Let's do it!"

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Fishkit, Stonekit and Sunstorm stood on the leader's rock. The mountain lion was at the other end of the camp. Sunstorm shouted to her clan.

"ColdClan, grab a piece of fresh-kill and follow me!" She shouted.

Confused, the ColdClan cats didn't move. That was until Mudstar suddenly absorbed what she had said, and nodded. "Do as she says!"

Cats ran to the fresh-kill pile, grabbing what they could. Fishkit, Stonekit and Sunstorm raced forwards, followed by the whole clan.

The little kits knew where they were going, and they were over a branch in a split second. Sunstorm waited at the bottom as cats followed the prophecy kits.

"I hope you know what you're doing, Sunstorm!" Mudstar hissed at her as he ran past with a crow in his mouth.

Suddenly, the mountain lion seemed to latch on to the fact that there was lots of prey on the other side of the river bank. Surging forward, the lion's eyes were focused on one thing: the food on the other side.

At that moment, Sunstorm nearly screamed. Lilypaw was still trying to carry a heavy rabbit, and hadn't seen the mountain lion behind her. "Lilypaw!" The golden cat yelled, but it was too late.

Lilypaw's body was thrown against a nearby tree, thrown aside by the force of the mountain lion. Sunstorm heard a crack, and she looked away. *I just lost another friend!* She cried to herself. *Larkwing, please look after Lilypaw in StarClan. She didn't deserve to die today.*

There was no time to grieve. The mountain lion was only a fox-length away from the food. The cats watched from the tree they had

retreated to, all with open eyes and hopeful hearts.

With a massive bound, the mountain lion leaped over the thundering stream... and slipped when he landed on the other side. An almighty splash made the cat's eyes widened, and the lion struggled to keep his head up. The torrents of water kept pushing him back and back, and the cats watched still fearfully, like they half expected him to bound out the water alive and well.

Sunstorm let out the breath she had been holding since the start of the horrific war. It was over.

For now.

23. Skyleap

This made it to #327 in Fantasy. Thank you for that.
Exams are over, so I can update again! >_< #cheerforme

Silence.

Dead silence.

Skyleap's heart was pounding, almost as though it was trying to escape from her throat. Pricking her ears from left to right, she looked for signs of danger. None seemed to be apparent, so she stepped into the clearing, and her breath was taken from her like cold water rushing over her body. The fur along her neck prickled, and she felt warm water blur her vision. With HeatClan's battle and the mountain lion's sudden attack, the clan cats were at an all time low.

Proud of her sister's efforts to treat everyone even whilst suffering from the loss of her apprentice, Skyleap watched Sunstorm talk with Mudstar. The leader had tore his front leg right open, and yet refused to be treated till every other cat had his or her scratches looked at and wounds tended to. It had only been a few moments since he had announced the dead. Lilypaw the strong, he had called the young apprentice, who now hunted with her warrior ancestors. A shock to Skyleap had been the news of Honeystrike's death; she had suffered greatly both physically and mentally by the loss of her first born kit. Some said she died of heartbreak, however she had been badly injured by the HeatClan attack.

Gorseface had of course been devastated, and couldn't even bring himself to look at his remaining kit, whom in Honeystrike's dying breath had been named Icekit, for it was a pale grey tom with light blue eyes. The queens were currently taking it in turns to feed the newborn orphan, but Skyleap felt a sense of responsibility towards it for reasons that were unknown to her. Day and night she watched over it. The poor thing had no idea what was going on; it was blind

to the world, and Skyleap was thankful - the young kit did not want to meet the world it faced in the future yet.

Change was happening in the clan, and Skyleap felt helpless. Marshfoot's return hadn't been welcomed by all the members of the clan; many wondered how he could help the clan at all. He was certainly not welcome here, and nor was his brother. Sootsplash was also frowned upon, though the majority of ColdClan thought he was brave to stay and fight the mountain lion.

Heroes in the clan also included that of Fishkit and Stonekit, whom had lived up to the prophecy. Perhaps all the mountain lions were dead, perhaps they were not, but the more they killed, the less likely the others were to attack. Fishkit and Stonekit had finally been named Fishpaw and Stonepaw. Although they were young, they were ready for new challenges. Fishpaw had decided to replace Lilypaw, and had promised to serve ColdClan in her name. Her brother had taken up an apprenticeship under Stagfoot, as Mudstar had thought the tom that could usually kill mountain lions would be a good mentor to the one who was prophesied to do so. Of course, some of the clan had wondered why Mudstar would choose a cat who was once a loner to be the mentor of such an important apprentice, but the leader's mind was made up and Skyleap was happy that he had chosen Stagfoot, whom she knew would be loyal.

Skyleap nervously awaited the arrival of her kits, as Sunstorm had said they were due any time now. Marshfoot had made her less anxious for the birth, but she didn't know why he was here or how long he was going to be here for. For the past night he had been helping treating injuries alongside Sunstorm, who seemed glad of the help.

Mudstar's voice rang through the camp. "I need another patrol down near the HeatClan border; Webfall has just returned with news that a HeatClan patrol is arguing with a ColdClan one, and I want more cats down there in case this turns into a full scale battle." The chocolate coloured tom looked weary, and his lithe body sagged slightly. He had lost a life in the battle, and his spirits had deteriorated.

"I'll go with Berrystep, Sandfall and Sootleg to join them." Lakeheart

remarked, getting up from his rest point under a tree.

Webfall, who had been regaining his breath after running from the border, piped up. "No, wait!" He called out, lumbering over to where Mudstar and Lakeheart stood. "It's that exiled HeatClan cat Marshfoot they want to speak with."

Surprised, Skyleap went to her mate's side. Tilting her head, she licked his flank. "I wonder what they could want with you? You belong with us now."

Marshfoot didn't look so sure - in fact, he definitely wanted to go and speak with HeatClan; Skyleap could see it in his eyes. "Take me to them, Webfall."

"I'm coming!" Skyleap jumped in front of the toms.

Glancing at Webfall, Marshfoot shook his head. "No, Skyleap, you stay here. Who knows what they want? I don't want you getting hurt."

Angrily, Skyleap took a step forward. "And I don't want *you* getting hurt. Whether you like it or not, I'm coming."

There was nothing more to be said, and so the toms raced forward into the depths of the forest. Skyleap found it incredibly difficult to keep up, and it wasn't as though Webfall, Marshfoot or Sootsplash were exactly slowing down for her. She did feel like a dead weight, but pushed on through the trees. Soon they had arrived at the border, and Skyleap could see the place she pushed Dovefeather from.

"Marshfoot." From her left, the voice of Foxstar rose above nature's sounds. Meeting face to face with each other, Skyleap found Foxstar's gaze chilling. Her heart broke slightly as she saw Cloudmask stood behind him, however she guessed it was important as all the main figures in HeatClan seemed to be here. All the HeatClan cats seemed to be injured in some way - they had cuts that were badly treated all over their bodies.

"Foxstar, you made it quite clear I was not welcome in HeatClan

any longer. I did as you asked; I left." Marshfoot held himself tall and proud, and Skyleap fell in love with him all over again.

Glancing at his deputy, Foxstar puffed out his chest. "No, Marshfoot, I'm here to tell you that we need you. We need you now, more than ever. Twigjaw is sick and old, and Ivypaw is nowhere near experienced enough to take on the full duties of the medicine cat. HeatClan is your home, and it is the only place where you belong."

"I have family here. I can't just leave them!" Marshfoot said angrily.

"And you don't have to." Cloudmask stepped forwards. "Skyleap, come and join HeatClan. Your kits will thrive and be with both their parents, and you will be living in the midst of a great clan!"

Turning to face her, Marshfoot looked into her eyes. "C'mon, Skyleap. A new adventure together, doesn't that sound great? Somewhere we can bring our kits up together!"

Skyleap was silent for a few moments, as if she was contemplating it. The truth was, she already knew her answer. She loved Marshfoot with all her heart, and that's what made the decision so difficult.

"No, Marshfoot. I was born in ColdClan, and my family is here. I want my kits to be raised how I was, as I could not have asked for a better kithood. I decline your offer."

"Skyleap..." He whispered sadly. He sounded so lost and alone, but when his brother laid a comforting tail on his shoulders. This seemed to help him decide where he wanted to be. "Then I hope you'll understand that I belong with my brother in HeatClan."

Taken aback, Skyleap's eyes widened as Marshfoot and Sootsplash were greeted by their old clanmates. Webfall stood by her side, a little shocked himself. The three other ColdClan cats who were there, Mistheart, Magpiefur and Creekwillow, swarmed her, almost protecting her in case the HeatClan cats turned on them. However Cloudmask broke through, and beckoned her to one side.

"I don't want to talk, Cloudmask. Can't you see I'm hurt? Oh wait,

stupid question, why am I so mousebrained? Of course you can't, because you couldn't see how much it hurt when you left, could you!?" She yelled at him, but her father hushed her gently.

"Skyleap, I know you don't want to talk to me, but you're in danger, and so are your unborn kits. I fear one of our cats is gaining allies to go against you and your clan. I cannot say whom for I may be wrong, but once, not so long ago, you took something of their's that cannot be replaced. Be careful, my dear Skyleap. This uprising cat is a threat to us all."

With that, Cloudmask joined his clan once more, leaving Skyleap hurt and astounded.

24. Sunstorm

"Hey, Stonepaw, let's climb that tree!" Fishpaw's voice filled the training hollow. Her brother chased after her, and the two easily climbed the tree. It brought back memories of the recent mountain lion attack, but Sunstorm shook them away. Her bright ginger fur shone healthily, and her long tail was wrapped around her body. The training hollow was warm and comforting, and she was lost in a reverie about her times training here. Stagfoot was supervising the young apprentices only a few fox-lengths away. Sunstorm was proud of Fishpaw - the young cat didn't seem to be suffering too much by the loss of her tail, though sometimes her balance faltered.

It was half a moon since the attack had happened, and not a day went by where Sunstorm didn't think about her first apprentice, Lilypaw. Although she was in StarClan now, Sunstorm often felt sorry for the two siblings she left behind. They would never be at peace, as neither of them had the chance to say goodbye. The medicine cat knew the feeling - Larkwing's death was a predominant nightmare to her.

Recently, Sunstorm had been spending more and more time with Spidertail. She had forgotten how much the tom meant to her, and their bond was having to be steadily rebuilt. However, the clan did keep her extremely busy. Motherless and with a father that couldn't bare to look at him, Icekit suffered every day from nightmares, just as Sunstorm did. Skyleap had appeared to have taken the kit as one of her own, and with her kits due any time now, the young tom would soon have littermates to play with.

Rosepaw and Echopaw were distraught after their sister's death. Their training wasn't as intense as it had previously had been, and they sat around with their parents a lot. Everyone was exhausted after the attack, Sunstorm maybe even more so.

"Careful, Fishpaw!" Sunstorm raised her voice as the young cat stumbled as she climbed. Glancing at Stagfoot, the tom gave her a simple nod and expertly clambered up the tree, joining the two

apprentices. She came to the conclusion that the apprentices were in safe paws, so stalked back into the forest.

Walking only a few fox-lengths into the depths of the forest, Sunstorm heard a sound from the undergrowth. *Something* was moving, and Sunstorm instinctively dropped into a crouch, her ears flickering in every direction. Taking a step forward, she heard the sound of pawsteps. Sniffing the air gently, she smelt a familiar smell.

"Skyleap! What are you doing out here? You could give birth at any time! It isn't safe to be out here alone." Sunstorm mewed angrily.

The grey and silver she-cat jumped slightly when she saw her sister in front of her, but sheathed her claws once more when she realized who it was. "Sunstorm, I.. I can't stand it anymore! This place is driving me crazy. I feel like I'm a worthless weight to the clan. These kits are just holding me back!" Poor Skyleap's face looked like she was going to scream with rage and sadness, and Sunstorm rushed to her sister's side. Unlike Skyleap, Sunstorm never felt like she didn't belong in the clan or that she was worthless to the clan; nor did she believe that any of the cats in clan didn't have their uses. With a gentle lick on Skyleap's ear, Sunstorm pressed against her.

"My dear Skyleap, why do you fret? The clan adores you, and these kits will be a blessing, not a curse. I know our past has been hard, and the recent events.. well, that's been difficult too. But just think of how far we've come! Do you remember when we were apprentices? Why, we were naive and carefree. Now look at us, we've matured and we're feeling the burdens of being adults." Their tails entwined and they sat together, Skyleap's head buried in Sunstorm's fur. "Hey, how about we go to the MoonCave? When I'm low, I know I can always rely on StarClan to guide me. Perhaps if we rest there for a while, we'll feel our ancestors protection once again?"

With a simple nod, Skyleap got to her feet. She obediently followed Sunstorm in the direction of the undergrowth, though slightly slower as she was weighed down by her kits. When they reached the MoonCave, Sunstorm gazed up at the mountain towering above

them, reminiscing about current events. A crow cawed from a nearby tree, almost as if to say 'it'll be okay in the end.' Skyleap was obviously anxious to rest, and pushed past Sunstorm to get in the MoonCave. Her own heartbeat always seemed to pick up it's rhythm when she went in, as she knew how much of a sacred place it was.

As she entered, she noticed Skyleap had perched on a ledge, and had her head between her paws, still looking rather miserable. Sunstorm moved slowly but surely over the crevacese, until she reached the MoonRock. Instead of putting her nose against it when she came for the medicine cat ceremony, she just sat next to it, staring at it intently.

"Hey, Larkwing." She whispered. "I don't know if you can hear me, but I wanted to remind you of how special you will always be to me." Dropping her head to look at the floor, her eyes clouded over. Although there was no reply, she didn't mind. Coming here had been for Skyleap, not her.

Making her way back over to where Skyleap had been, her body became rigid in fright as she realised her sister had disappeared. "Skyleap!?" She called out, her voice ricocheting off the cave walls. Frantically, she jumped into the ledge Skyleap had been on, and when she looked around, she finally saw the grey fur of her sister - pushing her nose against the MoonRock! "No, Skyleap, you're not a medicine cat! This breaks all the laws!" She squealed, bounding towards her sister. Without another word, Skyleap was lost in the trance like state Sunstorm knew well.

Unsure of what to do, Sunstorm looked wildly around. "Now you're crowfood, Skyleap!" She hissed angrily. "I guess I'll just have to join you." As her nose touched the rock, she felt a buzz down her spine like no other she had felt before. *How many sacrifices do I have to make for my mousebrained fool of a sister!?*

«»«

When Sunstorm usually connected with StarClan, she almost always had a dream. However this time she seemed to be in the realms of StarClan itself. Stars sparkled like jewels around her, and she got to her paws steadily. Once more she called out her sister's name, but

no reply came.

As she began to walk forward, she felt as though she was being watched. Knowing that she shouldn't be there was one thing, but having the whole of StarClan know she was there could change her destiny forever. Looking down at her paws, she saw her usually bright ginger fur now had a one-time, as the purple and blue sky around her did not light her pelt the way the sun did.

After walking for what seemed to be for a lifetime over hills of blue studded with stars, Sunstorm reached a tree. As she got closer, she noticed that the tree was pitch black and almost like a mirage. That's when she finally heard the voice of her sister from the other side of the wide trunk. Scampering round, there was no sign of her sister, but her voice calling Sunstorm's name was gradually getting louder.

A large golden she-cat appeared at the top of the hill. Her face looked desperate and when her eyes finally found Sunstorm's, a look of relief washed over her. Sunstorm recognised her as none other than Dawnstar, and raced over the hill towards her. In the middle of a sea if starry-pelted cats laid Skyleap. With a gasp, Sunstorm raced forwards, parting the StarClan cats as she went.

"Sunstorm, help me! I'm having my kits!" As if the kits were trying to prove they were coming, Skyleap's belly pulsated and she let out a yowl of pain.

Ashstone's face appeared at Sunstorm's side. "She can't be having her kits here, Sunstorm! If she does, the kits won't be able to leave StarClan."

"What do I need to do!?" She questioned, searching his face for answers.

Looking to other members of StarClan, Ashstone looked like he didn't want to tell her. However Sunstorm's face of anguish and Skyleap's moans were enough to make his mind up.

"You have to kill the StarClan versions of yourselves." He said sadly, looking to the floor.

Sunstorm could almost scream. They had to kill themselves so they could live again? She knew that if they killed themselves here, when they died in the real world, they could never go to StarClan. *Is the price of life really worth losing a home after death?* She thought to herself. Her mind and heart were in conflict with each other, and Dawnstar laid her tail across her back.

"Decide quickly, my dear. Skyleap hasn't got long." Her face was caring but her eyes were pained.

"Kill us.." Sunstorm whispered, closing her eyes tight.

The last thing she heard was Larkwing's voice. "I'll do whatever it takes to establish the connection between the living and the dead, Sunstorm. You *will* see me again when you die. I will find a way!"

Completed Story

So that's it guys, and what a ride it's been! Finally, part one of the ColdClan series is complete. I truly hope you've enjoyed it - I know I certainly have! The next book is deadlined to start being written next week, however I love writing it so much I may have to post the first chapter earlier!

Thank you for sharing this experience with me. I hope you'll carry on this awesome adventure, and don't forget to follow me to keep up with news!

I know I left it on quite the cliffhangers, but all shall be explained in book two.

Also, if you have any questions about me or the characters, or just about the book itself, feel free to leave a comment in this chapter.

See you soon!

Book Two Is Up!

Hey, ColdClan fans!

Book two is up. It is called ColdClan: Sky of Blood.

Hope you enjoy it!